

LWF GLOBAL CONSULTATION

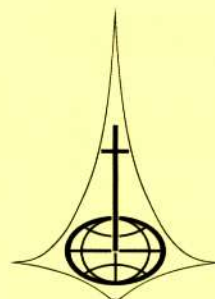


ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

Report

**Montreux, Switzerland
5-8 November 2001**

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION



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FOREWORD

"Engendering Theological Education For Transformation" is a follow up of the Second Global Consultation on Theological Education organized by the Department for Mission and Development, Lutheran World Federation in Rome, from 23–27 August 1999, under the theme "Re-visioning Theological Education." It is also a once in ten-year gathering of theologically trained women organized by the Desk of Women in Church and Society (WICAS). Message from the Rome Consultation to the member churches states "Going into the next century, curriculum development should be especially attentive to issues of contextualization, spirituality, the insight provided by feminist and other liberation perspectives, transformation and ecumenics."

This consultation therefore is not only a continuation of the process that began in Rome but is also a response to the specific request of some of its participants. In the past few decades, feminist theologies have made tremendous impact in the following areas:

- A broadening of perspective in the field of Biblical theology that includes a re-reading of scriptures, feminist exegesis and hermeneutics.
- Excavations of the existence of women without history and an enlarging of their participation in church history, documentation of their diverse contributions despite their invis-

ibility in history, using extra canonical texts and other resources.

- Theological anthropology, Christology, images of God, language about God, symbols by which God is presented have all been freshly analyzed in systematic theology. Emphasis has also been given to start with ones' experience and then relating them to others and to doctrines.
- Issues of spirituality, new ways of worship and issues of women have been analyzed in practical theology enabling networks to be forged across boundaries and alliances on issues.
- Women have forged great alliances across boundaries and worked ecumenically.

Nevertheless, it is to be admitted that a majority of men and some women still have varied negative reactions to and reservations against feminist theologies and the impact they have made. At best, feminist theologies are offered as a subject in some seminaries, or as an elective or in the form of "Women's Studies" but have never been fully recognized as required courses or fully integrated into the curriculum. The global women's movement and international organizations have rightly identified gen-

der not only as a tool of analysis but also as a strategy to address the context of our times. There is a need to make a distinction—and connection—between gender perspective and feminist perspectives in theology. But there is yet to be clarity on the term gender as well as a common strategy in theological education for mainstreaming gender.

There are also several related questions as we take the effort to engender curriculum. Are the churches experiencing the felt need to engender and are they willing to take risks of re-visioning theological education? What are the organizational changes this engendering might demand? How could the funding for such a long process

be ensured? How can the popular, pastoral and the academics be embraced in and through theological education that caters to the lay and the theological students?

Therefore this initiative is but a starting point of a long process. The paper presentations and the exploratory discussions are themselves valuable contributions to the beginning of the process. We invite the churches and seminaries to use them to explore the engendering of theological education for transformation.

Dr Péri Rasolondraibe

Director

Department for Mission and Development

ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

**An International Follow up Consultation on Re-visioning Theological Education
5—8 November 2001, Montreux, Switzerland**

A Brief Report

For centuries, the histories and contributions of women to church and society have been hidden or submerged. With increased access to education and participation in the life and ministry of the church, women have developed critical tools and equipped themselves with skills to analyze traditional teaching and theology and are striving to bring to the fore these hidden histories and contributions of women. Awareness regarding women's issues in theology has grown, and the need to correct this biased or non-inclusive theology is gaining ground. The attempt to do, write and incorporate Feminist perspectives in theology has therefore emerged as a critical response to the androcentric and patriarchal bias in the various disciplines of theological education.

Although feminist / womanist / Mujerista theologies have made a tremendous impact on Biblical and Systematic scholarship and influenced Practical theology, they have nevertheless remained on the peripheries of theological education and curriculum and have often been considered with a certain degree of ambivalence. At the Second Global Consultation on Theological Education organized by the LWF/DMD in Rome (1999) on the theme, "Re-visioning Theological Education," the participants stressed the need for "curriculum development which is attentive to contextualization, spirituality and the insights provided by feminist and other liberation perspectives."

Upon this recommendation and upon the specific request of some of its participants, the Desk of Women in Church and Society (WICAS) organized a global consultation for theological educators to reflect further on the possibilities, prospects and methods of "Engendering Theological Education for Transformation." The Consultation, which was held in Montreux, Switzerland, from the 4–8th November 2001, brought together thirty theological educators, twenty women and 10 men from the various regions of the LWF representing several disciplines. Five were ecumenical participants.

The Consultation aimed at:

- Assessing the various and diverse feminist theologies from around the world and reviewing the ways in which these are taught at present in the seminaries and theological colleges represented.
- Exploring possibilities for mainstreaming feminist perspectives into the different disciplines of the theological curriculum.
- Developing a set of guidelines for engendering theology.
- Identifying a balanced core group that would formulate an integrated curriculum that could be presented to the Churches.

A number of issues and rationales relevant to engendering theology were raised through biblical reflections in the daily worship, in plenary sessions and in regional and discipline group sessions namely Biblical Studies, Systematics/Church History, Practical Theology and New Approaches, to draft some guidelines for the core group which would develop a curriculum in the near future.

The following papers were presented:

A Keynote address on:

Journey Thus Far: An Overview of Feminist Perspectives from Around the World.

Presentations on:

1. *Engendering Theology: What does it entail?*
2. *Engendering Theology as an Inter-disciplinary Approach.*

Panel presentations on:

1. *Feminist Perspectives in Theology Transforming Curriculum: A Regional Update.*
2. *Integrating Gender perspectives in the Curriculum—Biblical, Systematic and Practical theology.*

Some of the major issues/ ideas raised in small group discussions during the consultation are as follows:

- Engendered theology challenges the traditional assumption that the male is normative; that male theology and male experience can speak equally for women. Engendering theological education means transforming the entire theological enterprise. It is not a matter of adding to, or being corrective. To engage in theological dialogue with gender issues is to see how the understanding of gender in society has affected our understanding of God, the Scriptures, the teachings and practices of the church and our relationships as men and women with one another. The purpose of engendering theology is to provoke a reforma-

tion and reformulation of theological education, which is both relevant and life affirming for women and for men.

- The need to engender theological education was unanimously affirmed. As indicated by the regional reports there is much work that needs to be done, for there is no institution where engendered theology is being done in a thorough manner. We are all at different stages and using different methodologies depending on our context. Engendered theology is not a matter of discussion but one of collaborative action that takes contextuality seriously. It should be introduced in the popular, pastoral and academic levels of the church. It needs to include students, faculty, and administrative heads as well as people from the grass roots in discussions on content, and method of doing theology.
- There is still some ambiguity and confusion regarding terms such as "feminist," "womanist," and "gender." This lack of clarity is proving to be problematic. Feminist/womanist views on language are complex and very diverse reflecting not only political, regional and cultural differences within feminism itself, but also within other disciplines. Language is a cultural and social institution and we need to analyze linguistic structures and how they shape theological thinking and experience. It is essential that we work towards promoting a language that is inclusive both with regard to God and humanity.
- A critical component of the gender discourse and its potential for transformation and justice in society is power and how it operates. Hence an analysis of power is essential for gender analysis.
- Tokenism, fear, the quota system, limited financial resources, competition for jobs, lack of published resources in the vernacular, dominance of English language, lack of a cultural critique of theological education, lack of faculty,

and the existing paradigm of the scholar are some barriers that hinder the engendering of theological education.

- Engendering theology is possible through networking, sharing of resources, equipping individuals with analytical tools, and training of faculty. Doing engendered theology retrieves lost and hidden stories and traditions and breaks open cultural stereotypes and hierarchies. It offers new ways of reading the Biblical texts and seeks to free them from their patriarchal moorings. Engendering theology requires collaborative reflection with people on the margins of society.
- It is not easy to formulate a single integrated curriculum. A multiplicity of models is needed for the purpose of preparing an integrated curriculum. Therefore as an initial exploration, it was decided to use the outcome of the group discussions on curriculum formation as a base to work on.

The following members were nominated by the participants to form the Core Group that would be convened in a year's time.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Rev. Andreas Koranyi | - Hungary |
| 2. Dr Musa Filibus | - Nigeria |
| 3. Dr Monica Melanchthon | - India |
| 4. Dr Norma Cooke Everist | - USA |
| 5. Ms Allie Ernst | - Australia |
| 6. Dr Arnfridur Gudmundsdottir | - Iceland |
| 7. Dr Lothar Carlos Hoch | - Brazil |
| 8. Dr Sara Dille | - Canada |
| 9. Dr Beverley Haddad | - South Africa |
| 10. Dr Isabelle Phiri | - South Africa |



Participants of the consultation and staff members of DMD/LWF

A COMMON MEMORY

Introductory Remarks

Engendering Theological Education for Transformation is an international consultation on re-visioning theological education conducted by the Lutheran World Federation's Department for Mission and Development in Montreux, Switzerland, from 4–8 November 2001. It is a follow up to the second Global Consultation on Theological Education that was held in Rome in August 1999. Thirty theological educators who are involved or interested in feminist perspectives gathered for the consultation. Care was taken to ensure ecumenical participation and appropriate representation from all continents. One third of the participants were men.

The consultation initially aimed to appraise the diverse feminist theologies from around the world; review ways in which these are taught at present; explore possibilities for mainstreaming feminist perspectives into the different disciplines of the theological curriculum; develop a set of guidelines for engendering theology; and identify a balanced core group that would formulate an integrated curriculum that could be presented to the churches. Although feminist theologies have made a tremendous impact on biblical and systematic scholarship, they nevertheless remain on the margins of the theological curriculum and are often viewed with ambivalence. This consultation therefore focused on this issue and sought to

develop guidelines for the integration of feminist perspectives in all the disciplines of the curriculum.

The Consultation

Rationale: Feminist perspectives in theology have brought a new focus in course content, which not only brings women's participation and women's concerns out of the shadows, but also a new way of theologizing, which begins with the experiences of marginalized people, particularly women. The present period in history demands that people preparing for leadership in the church urgently need to acquire the values and skills developed in gender analysis. In order to build community in the church and the world, it is essential to overcome the ontological and historical props to hierarchies and oppressive practices that theology has long provided. Engendering theological education includes and moves beyond feminist perspectives, seeking the reformulation of theology in ways that affirm and promote life for all people. This requires the re-visioning of course content and methodology. (Cf. Paper by Priscilla Singh)

Process: Participants met in plenary sessions, small groups and twice for daily worship. A number of papers introduced the rationale where issues relevant

to engendering theology, and summarized the journey thus far, including updates on the current state of the inclusion of feminist perspectives in theology around the globe.

Background: The interrelationship between women, religion and education has been of great importance for the position of women. In the past, women's experiences, contributions and histories remained largely hidden in the Church and their subjugation was justified through the scriptures. Official positions of power and authority were almost exclusively reserved for men. One area where women made a large contribution in the past is that of mystical and devotional literature, where they could freely express their own religious experience. As women have gained access to education, they have also gained access to fuller participation in church life and theology. They have developed critical tools for the analysis of traditional theological teachings. Today Christian women from around the world are engaging in and doing theology in a new way, so that feminism is far from being just a western development. This new awakening at a global level is a true *novum* in human history and consciousness. As a new academic field, feminist theology first emerged during the late 1960s and 70s. It is impossible to suggest a simple, unequivocal definition of what feminist theology is, apart from the fact that it is born out of women's experience and commitment and involves advocacy and engagement. There are many feminist theologies because women's experiences, contexts and reflections are diverse. (Cf. *The Journey Thus Far*, paper written by Ursula King.)

Regional updates: These were presented by representatives from each continent on the ways feminist perspectives in theology are currently included in the curriculum in their region.

Africa: The report from Africa noted that the major source of support for developing a feminist perspective in theological education is the "Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" an ecumenical women's group from across the continent. This Circle redresses the major issue of lack of publication by African women theologians. Identified issues of African feminist theology include African women's experiences of African traditional religions, Islam, mission

Christianity and African Christianity as well as colonialism, apartheid, post-colonialism, poverty, war and globalization. The teaching of theology from a gender perspective is difficult because it is linked with female staff members who are already very few in theological African institutions.

Latin America: The evolution of feminist perspective in theological curriculum is far from uniform across Latin America. An important constraint is that most institutions in the region have a conservative attitude towards texts. Feminist theology is considered a part of liberation theology with an emphasis on class and racial issues as well as women's issues. Many women professors take their work on gendered theology directly to the churches with an understanding that this is essential to change.

Asia: It is difficult to speak about the Asian and Pacific situation as such. This is evidenced in the fact that some Lutheran churches ordain women, while others do not. The Gurukul Lutheran seminary in Chennai, India, is on the forefront of engendering theology, with its MTh in women's studies. It is a concern that, in other Asian countries engendering theology is not on the agenda. There are often small numbers of women students involved in theological education and often only one female faculty member.

Europe: The report from Europe focused on the Scandinavian region of the continent and did not account for Eastern, West and Central Europe, perhaps because Scandinavia is often seen to lead the way in engendering theological education. Yet even here there are pockets of resistance and engendered theology is not fully integrated into the curriculum. The majority of students interested in feminist theology are still female and qualified female theologians often find it hard to get positions. While there are now more female than male students, not all the female students graduate. In these state churches, often the push for gender inclusivity has come from the state.

North America & Caribbean: The inclusion of feminist perspectives in theology and theological education has gained wide acceptance, even though some struggles remain. On an average, women comprise one third of seminary faculties; some are full professors; one is a seminary president. (This is the situation in the ELCA, not LC-MS.) Since women in ordained ministry are in their fourth generation, there

are many female ministry role models. Nevertheless, some men may "play the politically correct game," without the transformation of underlying gendered attitudes, arguing that engendered theology is not a core issue in the larger church. Many men however fully appreciate feminist contributions and now use collaborative male-female leadership styles.

Major issues raised in small group discussions during the consultation

Engendering theological education

- Engendering theological education means transforming the entire theological enterprise. It is not a matter of adding to, or being corrective. To engage in theological dialogue with gender issues is to see how the understanding of gender in society has affected our understanding of God, the Scriptures, the teaching and practices of the church and our relationships with one another, as men and women.
- Engendering means giving birth to something new—to hatch, cause, induce, provoke, develop, excite, stimulate, rouse or stir. The purpose is not to incorporate feminist perspectives into the existing curricula, but to provoke a reformation and reformulation of theological education, which is both relevant, and life affirming for both men and women.
- Engendering theology does not mean supplanting men's way of knowing with women's way of knowing, thereby merely inverting the hierarchy.

Context

- In the consultation there was a unanimous affirmation for engendering theological education as it is affirmed as timely and transformatory. In some countries engendering has happened

on an institutional level so that women are ordained as well as welcomed into seminaries as students and faculty. In spite of this, the system was not transformed and so women are merely fulfilling male positions.

- We are all at different stages and using different methodologies depending on our context.
- The regional reports clearly show, no institution is yet doing engendered theology thoroughly.
- Often, the experience of women is that the official rhetoric and the lived experience in a given context do not match. Many women leaders still experience marginalization, denial and doubting of their gifts.
- In some contexts gender stereotyping is so prevalent that it is argued, women by nature do not possess the abilities to fulfill leadership roles. Women's roles are seen to be first of all as wives and mothers and it is argued that these then interfere with their work.
- We must account for the various contexts in which the church finds itself, as well as the various contextual layers within the church—popular, pastoral, and academic.
- Engendered theology is not a hyphenated theology, but theology in and of itself. Thus, Engendered theology is not a "special interest" theology separate from the "real" theology. Rather, our experience of ourselves as gendered beings permeates all. Engendered theology challenges the traditional assumption that male is normative, that male theology and male experience can speak equally for women.
- Engendering theology recognizes that theory is one form of praxis. Since all theory is abstracted from contextual situations, there is no true objectivity. Therefore, engendered theology stresses contextuality.

- Engendered theology discussions must involve students, faculty, powers of the institution and the world as well as those from the grass roots. It needs to be a collaborative venture with people on the margins.
- Moreover, engendered theology is not just a matter of discussion, but of collaborative action.

Language

- We must clarify our terminology. A feminist perspective in theology is not the same thing as gender studies, which is not the same as engendering theology.
- The connotation of terms such as "feminism," "womanist," "womanist theology" makes discussions difficult. For example, feminist theology is often thought of as only a first world, white woman's issue.
- The term "andrist" was suggested during the consultation to denote theology from a self consciously male perspective.
- Lack of clarity on the term 'gender' itself is problematic. It is not an easily translatable term.
- Language that works in one context will not necessarily work in another because we have different issues, histories and agendas.
- Since language shapes thinking and experience, inclusive language both for humanity and God is essential.
- The issue of women's ordination and discussions of engendering or of feminist perspectives in theology are often collapsed into one another. This must be avoided. The question of the ordination of women is a part of the question of engendered theology, but not the whole. Yet, engendering theology opens a broad ecclesiological space to discuss women's ordination.

Power

- Gender analysis necessarily involves an analysis of power in order to reveal the operation of power, reconstructing and reforming for the sake of transformation and justice.
- Engendered theology always includes gender awareness training, which includes power analysis.
- Power analysis includes examining policy, structure and organizational dynamics as well as processes of organizational change.
- We need to establish parallel processes between engendering theology and engendering the church and its structures. This involves not just education, but also the employment situations after education.
- Some participants felt that gender analysis necessarily leads into analysis of class, race, economics and ethnicity. Other participants felt that class analysis is fundamental to gender analysis. Others felt that any one analysis potentially leads into the other areas. These ideas were not discussed in plenary session, and bear further discussion in future.

Barriers to engendering theological education identified so far

- Engendering theology involves attitude change, which is difficult to achieve.
- Change is frightening. Powerful women are frightening. Questioning theology is threatening. There is a fear that engendering theology will involve feminization of the church. Some fear losing power.
- The association of engendered theology with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people

often present barriers but may also present opportunities. This is not the primary issue of engendering theology and was not a focus at the consultation.

- Often there is a lack of cultural critique in theological education, including lack of self-critique.
- The pressure and competition inherent in the economic race, upward mobility and self-actualization often suppress gender discussion, marginalize and disadvantage women and so leave them highly vulnerable.
- The dominance of western language prevents research in many other languages, since supervisors are unable to work with these languages and feel unable to supervise such research appropriately. Yet such contextual research is exactly the research which engendered theology seeks to promote.
- Lack of published resources in local languages is a barrier. The need to translate resources disadvantages those who are not familiar with the dominant languages and is expensive.
- The paradigm of the scholar as distant, objective, autonomous, participant observer is an outgrowth of individualism, enlightenment and rationalism. This paradigm is problematic and reflects an in built problem in western ways of thinking. It often includes dualistic thinking, which connotes woman as 'other'.
- Since this problematic paradigm is still the dominant paradigm, there are important financial implications about what kind of scholarship is supported, what is the academic agenda and who sets it.
- The need for engendered theology also requires faculty training.
- Two barriers in the North American context are that women in seminary assume the battles are won, and are surprised upon leav-

ing that they are not; there are also a large number of women on leave from call.

- Limited financial resources impact in several ways: at times the resources for gender analysis are not available. Adequate scholarship money is not available to cover women theology students who also maintain their role as mother and care giver. Lack of employment opportunities after education further detracts women from pursuing theological education. Funding is needed for new women faculty positions.
- Tokenism is a positive action that has negative consequences and often inhibits further change. This is the most dangerous stage, which leaves both women and the church vulnerable.
- The quota system is a positive action but may function as a limit and may promote inappropriate hiring.

Opportunities to engender theological education identified so far

- Engendering theology frees men as well as women, leading men to recognize their own engendered experience.
- Doing engendered theology retrieves lost stories and traditions and breaks open cultural stereotypes and hierarchies. It offers new ways of reading the Biblical text and seeks to free it from its moorings in patriarchy. It also values the stories and traditions preserved in other texts, narratives and traditions.
- Engendered theology does not require academic expertise, since it builds on experiences as gendered beings. On the other hand, there is also a need for theoretical reflection tools for gender analysis.
- Gender analysis needs to be framed as an opportunity and a potential. Even where institu-

tions are not ready to use this tool, individuals can and thereby become more aware of their own situation and influence. This awareness provides a point of immediate impact of this consultation on the contexts from which the participants have come.

- Consultations such as this promote and affirm the need for networking as a means of sharing resources, ideas and support.
- While the consultation set out with an aim of formulating *an* integrated curriculum, it has become clear that there is a need for a multiplicity of models to come out of this consultation.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dr Perl RASOLONDRABE

**Director, Department for Mission and Development, LWF
Geneva, Switzerland**



It gives me great pleasure to join my colleague, Ms Agneta Ucko, in welcoming you all to this Consultation on "Engendering Theological Education for Transformation." Many of you have traveled long distances. During these times of uncertainties and insecurities, I should like to say I am very happy and grateful that you arrived safely here. I hope that you had a good rest and are now ready for a very exciting consultation.

I believe that you all received the Aide-Memoire prepared by Ms Priscilla Singh for this consultation. In the Preamble of that Aide-Memoire she informs us that this consultation is a follow-up on the Global Consultation on Theological Education held in Rome in August, 1999 under the theme: "Re-visioning Theological Education." I should say that this is the first follow-up on that consultation and that we hope that others will still come either at the global or the regional level.

I should like to structure my Introductory Remarks by using three simple questions: Why? What? And How?

Why are we here?

The Rome Consultation" understood its task of "re-visioning Theological Education" not merely in the sense of revision (to look once again) or rethinking. The challenge was not to do an engine *tune-up* as it were, but

an engine *overhaul*. Moreover, it was emphasized that the task was not to find ways to append emerging theologies (e.g. feminist theology) to what was thought to be the established core of theological education, but to probe and reshape the whole of theological education from the perspective of feminist theology.

In Rome, two presenters, Dr Wanda Deifelt and Dr Ulrike Wagner-Rau, challenged the participants with the topic: "Feminist Theology: Rethinking of Theological Education." I am very delighted that Dr Wagner-Rau was able to be with us this time also. I was informed that her Rome presentation was shared with you earlier. In that presentation, Dr Wagner-Rau made and elaborated on six important points in the rethinking of theological education. One of these points, that is extremely relevant for our focus here is her call for a consideration of gender as a category in the effort of re-visioning theological education.

She wrote:

This interest in giving consideration to the relationship between the sexes is fed by the recognition that, however this relationship is constituted in different historical, societal and cultural situations, it is always characterized by a lack of symmetry, which is both the expression and the cause of unjust conditions in society and as such represents an ethical challenge for action. (Report p. 88)

And again she explained:

Indeed, the asymmetrical relation between the sexes is also reflected in theological thinking and the life of the church, and is generated and supported by them. (p. 89).

Dr Wagner-Rau summarized her point as follows:

The insights and formulations of problems from gender studies must be integrated into the content and methods of theological education. In addition, the fact that women and men are students of theology and are teaching theology must be taken into account in the reflections on both teaching and practice. The issues that arise must not be marginalized as "women's issues," as so often happens, but must be accepted as common issues for everyone. Men as well as women must recognize the limitations of their ways of seeing things, which is shaped by the individual, social and symbolic determination of their gender, and thus the mutual dependence of each upon the other's ways of seeing things. Only then can theology, through critical self-examination, end the continuation of the asymmetrical relation between the sexes through its specific ways of thinking, symbolizing and structuring church life. And only then can it serve a church whose mission commits it to justice and love. (P. 89-90)

The participants' responses, as recorded in the Consultation's Report, show the interest that the issue generated and the intensity of the discussion that followed the two presentations.

It is clear from reading the different responses and suggestions that the communion still has a long way to go in terms of integrating gender perspective in the way we teach and do theology. The consultation suggested that the LWF invite member churches to emphasize issues of gender and theology (including feminist theology). Some of the participants also requested that further discussions on these issues be pursued as soon as possible. Thus, WICAS and the LWF Staff Working Team on Theological Education decided to hold this consultation. This is why we are here.

What are we to do?

The main focus of this consultation will be curriculum formation. We will discuss ways to overhaul theological education curriculum in such a way that gender perspective would permeate all theological disciplines. In other words, we will discuss how to ensure a gender fair curriculum. While this is the main purpose, however, the Aide-Memoire gives us 5 intermediate objectives that we hope this consultation would achieve. Thus we will:

- Appraise the diverse feminist theologies in existence.
- Discuss ways in which these theologies are taught presently.
- Look at the possibilities for mainstreaming them into the different theological disciplines of the curriculum.
- Develop a set of guidelines for engendering theology.
- Establish a core group that could formulate an integrated curriculum.

These are achievable objectives. They are also objectives that will call on our resolve to move further ahead in this task of engendering theology.

How are we to do it?

The Aide-Memoire and the Schedule tell us that we will meet in plenary and in small groups. In the plenary session we will have paper presentations and a panel presentation followed by discussions. These plenary sessions will enable us to move into our group. Group discussions are expected to be result-oriented and thus are to be productive. They are more than just brainstorming sessions. Of course, we will not have the time necessary to formulate a full-fledged curriculum for theological education and curriculum also has to be context specific. We can, however, give pointers on how to engender curriculum for theological education.

For example, I recently talked with my daughter about this consultation and inquire how in her work she goes about engendering curriculum. My daughter, Dr Noro Andriantiana is Co-Director of the Community of Scholars program at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Campus and thus she works with curriculum policy. She told me that ensuring a gender fair curriculum involves addressing the faculty who will guide the courses, the students who will participate in the courses and the content of the courses themselves. More specifically, she mentioned four points:

- Faculty and students must reflect on their own educational experience with regard to what shaped their gender perspectives.
- Male faculty should be open to co-teaching with a female faculty in order to achieve a balance of perspectives.
- Assigned reading in courses should be balanced with female and male authors and perspectives.
- Both female and male faculties need to be open to perspectives of female students when reading papers or exams. Methods of testing and grading need to be reviewed.

As indicated earlier, a core group will be designated to continue working on what we have developed. The hope is that some sort of guideline will be sent to the churches and their theological institutions to help them in the task of engendering theological education.

The task in front of us is not an easy one. Indeed, it is very complex, and requires understanding, creativity, time, energy, faith and love. We need to remember, however, that this is important for the life and work of our communion. Therefore, I should like to express my gratitude to all the presenters for your dedication to theological education and for your commitment to a gender fair theology. Thanks to your work and contribution, we are not doomed to rehashing the past but enabled to usher what is new and liberating.

Finally, I should like to express appreciation to those who worked so hard in the preparation of this consultation. I should like to thank the Staff Working Team on Theological Education, represented by its chair Dr Vivian Victor Msomi for the planning and accompaniment of this consultation. I should also like to thank the WICAS desk, Ms Priscilla Singh and Ms Sylviane Canedo Sandoz for the tremendous effort you put into making this to happen.

Once again, welcome everyone and have a blessed successful consultation.



*Dr Connie Kleingartner,
USA (left) with
Dr Vivian Msomi,
LWF (right)*

ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: SOME EXPLORATIONS

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The theme of the Consultation "Engendering Theological Education For Transformation" has evoked a lot of interests and at times, curious remarks. One such was "are you going to endanger theological education?" Another query was whether we are trying to put "old wine in a new bottle." Many others are excited saying that it is timely, radical and visionary. I do hope it would be a combination of the first and the third remarks. I acknowledge that we are all at different stages of the process, with different contexts to address. Therefore this is but a beginning of a long process. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." I strongly feel that this small body is such a one.

I need to point out that I rather prefer the use of the term 'feminist perspectives in theology' than 'feminist theology' to acknowledge their rich and valid diversities and affirm their central and rightful place in theology, not a peripheral one. A question may arise "are we going to stir the pot, so to speak, and come up with a globalized feminist theology?" That definitely is not the intention. But I cannot help but think that if the essence of the sentence "Justification by grace through faith alone" could transcend cultural, geographical, race, class, gender boundaries, creating a great reformation knitting us together even after hundreds of years, there is every scope that a gender concept could and would do so, given the chance.

I would also like to affirm that feminist perspectives in theology have ceased to be the domain of women. Men have started to learn, understand and speak about it in positive ways. It would be interesting to make a survey of how many men now teach feminist perspectives. What we attempt at this consultation is to see how best the perspectives could serve in the mainstreaming of gender in theological education. At the cost of sounding repetitive, I want to record some of the impacts feminist perspectives have made in theological education.

- A broadening of perspective in the field of Biblical theology that includes a re-reading of scriptures, feminist exegesis and hermeneutics.
- Excavations of the existence of women without history, an enlarging of their participation in church history, documentation of their diverse contributions despite women's invisibility in history, using previously discarded sources. Analysis of Theological anthropology, Christology, images of God, language about God, symbols by which God is presented in systematic theology.
- Fresh inputs on spirituality, new ways of worship, forging networks and alliances across boundaries, and explicit voicing of women's concerns excluded to the margins of societal and church life.

- Challenges to the rationalist, clinical and dispassionate way of theologizing by beginning with women's experiences that elevate and authenticate emotions to a higher level than has been assigned to it so far.
- Personal behavioral changes, changes in campus life and in the churches' very being, when women gained entry into the ordained ministry, the decision-making bodies etc.
- Serious analysis and call to rethink on 'power' and how it is exercised in faith communities.
- Challenge to churches from being hierarchical structures to be worshipping communities.

Shortcomings

Nevertheless, it is to be admitted that some men and women still have varied negative reactions to and reservations against feminist theologies and the impact they have made. At best, they are seen as attempts made by women to reclaim their selfhood and at worst seen as a western phenomenon often influencing women of the south since they owe their beginning to the west, and because the west still serves as the training ground for many feminist theologians. It is also to be confessed that feminist perspectives in theology have not made intentional efforts to appeal to male solidarity.

The term 'feminist theologies' tends to limit or gives indications to being women's enterprise for women or "as a discipline within a discipline." They are grounded in women's experiences and by "defending the primacy of women's experiences above all other norms of theology, there is a real danger that the distinctiveness of the tradition, the essence that gives it its identity, is subsumed."¹

We acknowledge and affirm the multiplicity of their contexts and offerings. But an uneasy question needs to be asked. How far and how much could we

accommodate them all, and still speak with one voice? Theology has been the domain of the initiated and the elite as a specialized field, which tends to exclude the lay and make them uneasy about voicing their theologizing. There are walls between church women workers, the ordained women and the theological educators, which is detrimental to making it a dynamic movement. Some men, though convinced of the validity and relevance of feminist perspectives, cannot boldly confess to being part of feminist theologizing because of its exclusivist nomenclature.

There is also a doubt that feminism could fall into a rut and might lose its momentum and/or be accepted as something that is inevitable and thereby become accepted but a peripheral sphere for the interested who might be majority women. There are the second and third wave theological students who balk at the idea of being tagged as 'feminists.' A gender approach could circumvent many of these shortcomings.

The demand of our Times

Some Christians tend to have a compartmentalized existence in countries where Christianity is not a major religion. Some parts of the world not only live in a postmodern world, but also in a post Christian milieu while other countries are concentrated as fields for charismatic endeavors. The charismatic movement is overtaking the traditional churches and is offering alternatives and simplistic answers to many who feel exhausted to find answers to face life's complexities in the much bruised, abused and drastically changing world. The EATWOT General Assembly in Tagaytay, Philippines (1996) identified the need for a paradigm shift for three reasons:

- There are new brands of theologians with different perspectives.
- There is the identification of the need for a new religiosity and spirituality.

¹ Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" edited by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, published by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, England, p. 21-22.

- A new thrust, the hermeneutic key being no longer 'liberation' but 'life' for the whole of creation and emphasized; to do theology became more important than to think theology.

This 'being' and 'doing' on the basis of the thinking and feeling is the gender approach to theology. Experts on leadership also remark that the future of leadership is going to depend on 'sense-making' rather than on decision making. So, if the church as an organization has to lead, gender analysis becomes an urgent skill we need to train people in.

There is a tendency in our theologizing to be 'descriptive' than 'prescriptive' for political correctness and inclusivity. Though we have forged ecumenical alliances, we are unable to make a radical headway on the issues of ordination of women, issues of life orientations and human sexuality as these have the potential to divide. By discussing on gendered roles, expectations and stereotyping, there are possibilities of creating more openness to such sensitive issues that people had to live with.

Concept of gender

A conceptual clarity on gender is first of all essential if we are to lay the foundation for its practical application. We need to acknowledge gender-differentiated experiences and gender-related sufferings that are diverse in different settings. But foremost we need to emphasize that the term 'gender' is not to be used interchangeably with 'women' or 'feminism.' Gender is to be understood as an analytical tool to help women as well as men to understand the local contexts, structures and systems in the world through which classism, racism and sexism entrenches and operates. The visible expressions of these are patriarchy, hierarchy and dualism that are reinforced through culture, socialization processes, religious teachings and practices. These result in imbalance in and control over resources, increasing conflicts, neo-colonization, economic globalization, polarization, creation and perpetuation of injustices that marginalize most of humankind. People who live with these issues seek answers in

and through religion and spirituality. This 'capability building' as Amartya Sen puts it, offers theological education a leading role to play in the coming years.

Engendering for Transformation

Christianity is all about relationality: God relating to us and we relating to God and with one another. "Language about God shapes the thinking and life orientation not only of the corporate faith community but also of the individual members.... While officially it is rightly and consistently said that God is Spirit and so beyond identification with either male or female sex, yet the daily language of preaching, worship, catechesis and instruction conveys a different message." The images of God used by the church are mostly male: father, king, lord, and so on. One difficulty created by this is that while we understand the maleness of God to be metaphoric, this metaphor might attribute divinity to the male, therefore supremacy over the 'non-divine' female. "Therefore each and every word about God must be analyzed to see if it speaks of God and not of the one who speaks and interprets God; whether it speaks of the attributes and the Divine Mercy of God or of the power of the one who uses the language. Effort needs to be made however difficult it might prove to be, to move beyond gender, toward the divine mystery of God."²

Christian tradition with its roots in the Hebrew and Greco-Roman worlds has been faulted as a prime source of making women and nature inferior. It had given rise to triumphalistic colonization and subjugation of the more egalitarian indigenous communities. It has trivialized their subsistent existence that was more nature friendly. Their cultural diversities have been erased as paganism and their knowledge and wisdom discounted as outdated. The self understanding of Christians with no difference between Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, men and women as in Galatians 3:28 in the early church period had scope for leadership of women. But the churches have turned out to be hierarchical and patriarchal over centuries.

A gender analysis for example would help us to redefine the 'chosenness' of certain people, which

² Churches say NO to Violence Against Women, an LWF draft document, 2000.

we, as Christians have also appropriated and to a certain extent misused. This exercise liberates us from being separated or to be put in hierarchies but opens up the possibilities of building communities.

A Gender approach guides us to the 'text in contexts.' "To engage in theological dialogue with gender issues means to attempt to understand how the understanding of gender in society has affected our understanding of God, the Scriptures, the teaching and practices of the church and our relationship as men as women with one another. For ages, people have debated the roles and functions of women and men in the home, church and society, speculating on whether these roles are God prescribed or culturally determined. Some have argued that women and men are innately or ontologically different beings and therefore designed by nature to fulfill separate roles."³

Therefore we need to re-visit what we mean by the essence of human nature and our relational matters as women and men and with God. For example, we could ask "is there a particular nature for women and for men that is not just based on biological differences but on their psychology and approach to life?" If we are ontologically different, then what is the role and purpose of feminist perspectives? Is it to give the 'other' perspective, to build women's self worth and/or to challenge the existing theology? Alsford argues that a "relational approach can signal a constructive contribution from feminist thought to theology; It can mark a feminization of theology; rather than offering a distinct exclusive theology for women, the relational approach can offer an inclusive theology for humanity."⁴ This in turn could pose a challenge to the rising individualistic, self-promoting, self-actualizing ethos of the present times, which has already been seen and cited as a divisive factor internationally.

Though cultures are not constant and vary even within countries and changes over time, they have often been used as a tool to prescribe behavior and are closely linked with religion. For some Christians, culture can be layered like an "onion skin" where on the outside there are manifestations of what is known as 'Christian practices,' but deep inside, the influence of local culture remains. Some examples are the practice of veneration of ancestral spirits, racism, casteism etc. How do we accompany people who wrestle with cultures from without in their societies and from within in scriptural passages that are often made normative? Sometimes they mutually reinforce each other at times, to the detriment of women.

"One way to begin answering these questions is to specify to readers of the Bible that Scripture too is reflective and a product of particular contexts, culture and ages, and interpretations must look beyond and transcend these realities to get to the essence of the gospel that affirms life for all. This is very difficult and would be misconstrued as faith disturbing task."⁵ Feminist hermeneutics have pointed out that the Word of God is mediated through androcentric, patriarchal setting and that Biblical contents have a direct impact on the way women are perceived and expected to behave in the contemporary society. Elizabeth Gössmann with her reformist/traditional view suggests that we highlight the "consistent strand of counter tradition that runs throughout the history of Western Christianity..." "Gössmann shows that women's experience, women's counter-tradition, is a significant part of Christianity's history of divine revelation."⁶ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has also "uncovered an early type of Christianity, which was characterized by gender inclusivity in its egalitarian anticipation of the Kingdom of God."⁷ This would help in a way to tone down the call of radical feminism

³ "Gender and the Theology of the Churches," by Margaretha Ringström, in *Women* magazine, number 48, page 16.

⁴ "Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" edited by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, published by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, England, p. 21.

⁵ *Churches say NO to Violence Against Women*, an LWF draft document, 2000.

⁶ "Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" edited by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, published by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, England, p. 14.

that points out that "Christianity is irreformable in terms of any feminist agenda."⁸ By relating ourselves to the contexts of cultures, we also would be able to reclaim those positive cultures that have been erased dues to westernized Christianization.

There are other resounding questions we need to apply ourselves to. "Is patriarchy God's order, God's design? And "Can feminist perspectives in theology contribute to the historical demise of patriarchy?" The book "Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" explains that it is an urgent need to analyze "the full extent and depth of patriarchy within the structures..."⁹ "Unless these foundational faults are exposed, any reconstruction would be a façade without substance."⁹ Such a view is endorsed by secular leaders on management. "We finally need to put to rest the traditional hierarchical, job-based and bureaucratic model of organization..." since they are "simply too inflexible and rigid to compete effectively."¹⁰

Emphasis on 'his'tory to include 'her' stories not only within the canonized Bible but going extra canonical has to be made. Ursula King remarks that this "historical investigation is not simply a matter of setting the record straight...it is also an issue of personal and corporate identity."¹¹ This brings us to the question of the canon and the authority of the Bible. I asked a theologian why is it not possible to inform the lay people of the historical development of the Bible and its canonization processes. The answer was that it might disturb their faith. I could not but wonder, if the theologically trained people could learn, understand and accept the background and are still trusted to keep their faith and moreover be the pro-

motors of faith, what is wrong in trusting lay people. When selected texts are used and interpreted to keep women subservient and in limited areas of ministries. Ardent Christians who fervently defend positions on the basis of scriptures go into undue agonies that some of us are blasphemous, leading people astray if we do not subscribe to Biblical literalism.

Religious extremism from within Christianity and in other religions is a matter of great concern to us. 'The Great Commission' as the Mathew 28:16-20 more popularly known as the commandment to baptize, was excavated in the 19th century and used by the founders of the modern missionary movement. It is "still used as the 'proof text' for pushy forms of mission." The insistence most of the time is on 'conversion' and particular form of baptism that is one of the reasons for backlash against Christians in some parts of the world. Also the commissioning is perceived to be for the male disciples and therefore the insistence on apostolic succession. This leads to the exclusion of women in the preaching ministry. Christine Lienemann likes to regard this text instead as a manifesto for education for discipleship. If we read it from this point of view, we discover that it is talking, explicitly or implicitly, about teaching and learning, about the community of teaching and learning, and also about the power relationships within this community."¹² It is about being disciples and making disciples that is non-threatening and invitational also to other faiths. A more worthwhile initiative could be shifting the call to mission instead by focussing on the 'revolutionary song of Mary.' Then any one who is looking for a change in the unjust system feels the call and is willing to take risks, feels

⁷ *ibid*, p.14.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 8.

⁹ *ibid*, p. 14.

¹⁰ *The Future of Leadership* ed. By Bennis, Spreitzer, Cummings, published by Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company, San Francisco, 2001 p. 16.

¹¹ "Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" edited by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, published by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, England, p. 14.

¹² *Women and Power in Ecumenical Theological Education*, a Bible study presented at the Women and Leadership Seminar, Bossey, June 4-10, 2001.

invited to participate in God's salvific mission, women included. The world needs such a sensitive, justice seeking, and 'missional' approach.

There has been quite a positive reaction in men when confronted with feminist perspectives who are formulating men's studies, solidarity networks of men against violence against women etc. The inclusion of men into the subject enables two things: ensures men's active participation and encourages their inputs on gender that "ensures informed and credible critique".... "of men challenging the ownership of patriarchal oppression. Women have been forced to listen to male voices naming the pains of patriarchy."¹³ Allowing "challenging concepts from the realms of post-modernity gender theory to meet with biblical text....opens the way for new meanings for sacred text... how scripture remains an important resource for theology, and is not restricted to traditional scholarship, but central in the most radical contexts, including those that explore gender and sexuality."¹⁴

Many of the recent WICAS' and ecumenical consultations have given a call to concentrate on spirituality that is more deeply felt at the emotional level and living out one's faith. By authenticating emotional experience as important and valid, we would reemphasize the need to explore the many dimensions of spirituality and mystical experiences that have been under valued or sidelined. This would make a remarkable change in the practice of one's faith.

There are two specific reasons for using the term "engendering theological Education for transformation." First, it is not because it is the 'in' thing or the globally accepted, politically correct terminology. To be reformed and reformatory, there is a need for dynamism not 'status quo' therefore we have to move beyond feminist perspectives. I wonder whether it follows Hegel's postulation: "thesis, antithesis and synthesis."

There is also a second and a more vibrant meaning attached to the term 'engendering.' Engendering also means 'giving birth to something new (breed, cause, hatch, induce, muster, occasion, produce, provoke, work up, develop; excite, stimulate; arouse, quicken, rouse, stir.' I find all these words applicable when we use the term gender. The purpose of our gathering is therefore not to incorporate the feminist perspectives into the structured curricula that we already have, but to put our collective energies and expertise to mobilize a reformulation of theological education, relevant and life affirming.

Conclusion

The LWF's self expression that came out of the Eighth Assembly at Curitiba, Brazil, 1990 is "to intensify their efforts to be a sign of an inclusive communion in the world." This statement interpreted the Biblical understanding of the image of God (Gen 1:27) and oneness in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28). It emphasized the salvation given in Christ and the "promise of a new community between men and women." So we already have the mandate to move in this direction.

Therefore this consultation must make an attempt to go even beyond gender, be creative, taking care not to imprison the contributions of feminist perspectives into the traditional theological approaches. This means we need to make intentional and bold initiatives to uncover the trappings, uplift the essence of the gospel and live the hope of augmenting the new heaven and the new earth. 2001 has been declared the International Year of Volunteers therefore I invite you to be part of this process and make it a transformatory enterprise for all of us.

¹³ Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?" edited by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, published by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, England, p. 21.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 23.

JOURNEY THUS FAR: AN OVERVIEW OF FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES FROM AROUND THE WORLD¹⁵

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To contextualize feminist theologies and use them as a tool for transforming theological education, it is important to begin by looking back. Only then can we assess the development of feminist theologies so far, and look forward to reflect where we can go from here, and how we can in practice, integrate the multiple perspectives of global feminist theologies more fully into the theological curriculum.

In the past, the Christian churches have been so often a "world without women." Women were cast in the role of "others" by suffering estrangement and marginalization, so that women's own experiences, contributions, and histories have remained hidden and untold. Since its beginnings, feminist theology has been concerned with the critical recovery and remembering of women's agency and experience hidden in the official histories of the churches. Creating a women's theology of memory provides a new opportunity for affirming women's identity, for developing powers of

resistance, and for challenging the dominant histories of the past in order to create a different present and a new future—for women, for theology, and for the church.

Women have been the "other" *par excellence* in human history and culture. In the past they have been defined by and been dependent on men without a right to their own voice and to an independent role. Theologically too, women have been assigned a position of inferiority and subjugation. It is only in the modern period that the biblical teaching about both man and woman being created in the image of God, each representing the *imago Dei*, has been interpreted in a truly egalitarian sense, affirming equality and partnership.¹⁶ This biblical teaching was certainly of considerable importance for the first phase of the women's movement in the mid-nineteenth century, and it is also much commented upon in contempo-

¹⁵ I draw in this paper on several of my previous writings. Some parts present a revised version of ideas discussed more fully in my article "Feminist Theologies in Contemporary Contexts—A Provisional Assessment" in Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, eds., *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), and in Ursula King, ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World* (London: SPCK and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

¹⁶ See Kari E. Børresen, ed., *The Image of God. Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) and her article "Women's Studies of the Christian Tradition: New Perspectives" in Ursula King, ed., *Religion and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 245–55.

rary feminist theologies. However, before I attempt to sketch the feminist theological journey so far, I want to give you some background about my own theological path and struggles.

Some notes on my personal journey

I start with an anecdote. About twenty years ago, I suggested to the editor of a well-known British theological journal that I was interested in reviewing good books on feminist theology. Somewhat incredulously, he came back to me with the question "Are there ever any good books in feminist theology?" Oh, yes there are many, and ever more now and I soon managed, in spite of his lack of co-operation, to review many of them. Never take a "No"—a refusal—for an answer. That has been part of my experience of life.

As a young woman I experienced a genuine vocation, a deep desire to study theology, an attraction first conveyed to me by some Dominican fathers who taught me in my last years at school. Inspiring me with a restless sense of philosophical and theological enquiry, they first led me to read Thomas of Aquinas. I then became determined to study theology at university, against all odds and opposition, for I was drawn by an intellectual vision and calling which proved stronger than all personal and financial obstacles. It really was a struggle, in more senses than one, but I had the freedom and luck to study theology in Germany and France, where I was taught by some outstanding theology professors of international renown—all men—and over the years I became a trained theologian. I followed what was then the traditional theological and philosophical curriculum, which included courses from biblical languages to scriptural exegesis and hermeneutics, the history of doctrine and the church, systematic and practical theology as well as some philosophy of religion, comparative study of religions, and phenomenology. A strong tradition of systematic theology and many details of early, medieval and reformation church history were transmitted to us, but I also had the good fortune of experiencing more rarely taught courses, such as the history of Christian liturgy and art, of Christian spirituality, including Orthodox spirituality

and, most unusual of all for 1962, at the Institut Catholique in Paris where I was studying then, a course of lectures on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin which sparked an intellectual fire that was to have much influence on my future research activities.

Another determining aspect of my experience was the fact that as a woman I was forever in a minority, often a minority of one, among an exclusive majority of male students and later male faculty colleagues. Thus I learned early what it means to live at the margin, first socially and geographically in post-war Germany, then intellectually in the university where I studied something very different from what other women were studying, and where I was the permanent outsider among a large group of men studying theology and preparing for priesthood. I simply lived in this milieu and absorbed as much as I could, and progressed with my studies successfully and sometimes with acclaim. My critical faculties were not yet sufficiently developed nor had I any feminist awareness at that time—the late fifties and early sixties—to discern the oppressive, patriarchal structures of the educational system or of the church and its teaching authority. Yet I clearly remember the exhilarating sense of liberation when I experienced at a *Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques* in Paris the authoritative lecture of a well known woman professor of sociology. Suddenly I realized that women could be university teachers, too, that they could speak out in public, were listened to and taken seriously. It was an important psychological experience for me, for after years of hearing only male professors, I suddenly saw a woman with whom I could identify, who unknowingly affirmed my own powers and determination to be a female teacher passionately concerned with intellectual issues. It was like tearing down an invisible wall of silence, piercing through an incapacitating muteness, and calling me into speech with words only found years later.

In the meantime, there were many instances of non-recognition, refusal and exclusion on the way. I remember in my early student years being refused admission to join the courses on Thomas of Aquinas in a German college of Dominicans, only because I was a woman. I also recall the disappointing answer of an eminent British Jesuit whom I consulted about job opportunities when I first arrived as a young theol-

ogy graduate in London. He simply said to me "I am afraid there is no place for you in England." A remark never forgotten, and a prediction proved entirely wrong as I later chaired a department of theology and religious studies in England for many years and became a governor of a Jesuit theological college.

Now, after working in theology and religious studies for almost forty years, and doing research on women and religion for about thirty years, I am trying to encourage younger women scholars and theologians to expand their teaching and research interests, to participate with a sense of both responsiveness and responsibility in shaping the world of the future for both women and men, and shaping theological education.

Doing theology means reflecting on the root experience of faith, on the experience of divine disclosure, presence and grace. It is an activity, which is practical and existential, involving both the head and the heart. In whatever way such doing of theology is understood, it has now become impossible to ignore what share women have in the process of theologizing. We thus have to ask ourselves today what difference the full participation of women will eventually make to the shape of Christian theology.

The changing experience of women: The key role of education and prophetic visions of the future

In looking at the past, it is clear that women's literacy and liberation are closely intertwined. Education was the key in getting women access to social, economic and political power, as well as access to fuller participation in church life and theology. Through literacy—the ability to read and write, to study and take part in the production of knowledge—the women's movement developed, and it was through literacy that women also gained access to theological education. The story first began in the high Middle Ages when a few women, because of their literacy, already gained some access to teaching, preaching and the creation of new knowledge. This complex process is only coming fully into its own at present. For centuries, the church had a monopoly on education, and for centuries women had only a small part in receiving or giving education.

Not only Christianity, but all religions in the past have had a negative impact on women's education by legitimizing women's subjugation through their scriptures and doctrines, thereby re-enforcing women's second class status through millennia, holding women back like "birds in a cage" by restricting their full social and political participation. Women's access to higher education, especially to religious learning and theology, has been a decisive factor in shaping the modern women's movement. Women's access to theological education led to the struggle over women's access to the ordained ministry in different churches, and also to the development of feminist theology, which could not have occurred without women becoming academically trained to the highest level in all branches of theology.

The interrelationship between women, religion, and education has been of great importance for the position of women. Though religious teachings have been decisive in defining women's role and status in society, legitimizing their subordination and oppression in the past, religious ideals and vocations have also offered women spaces of freedom with alternatives for liberation and spiritual empowerment. Women have always had access to religious knowledge in informal ways, especially in relation to family life, where they have also been the primary religious educators. In the modern period, women religious, and especially women missionaries, have made a very large contribution to the development of formal education in primary and secondary schools for both boys and girls, in many countries around the world.

Education and literacy are paramount in gaining access to official positions of power and authority in the religions of the world, which, in the past, were almost exclusively reserved for men. Scholarly writing and teaching on religions was the prerogative of men too, and to this day women have difficulty in gaining full recognition in this field. The only area where women have made a large contribution in the past is that of mystical and devotional literature, in the visionary and prophetic genre, where women could freely express their own religious experience, although such expressions did not remain uncontested by male religious leaders, and sometimes cost women their lives. Today, all societies around the globe experience the impact of formal education,

open to women as well as men, and such education may well have a radically transforming effect on the traditional teachings of the world's religions, especially with regard to women.

From our feminist vantage point of today, it is surprising to discover how many women of the past, whether in the Christian West or in other religious cultures, have had the imagination and audacity to envisage alternative futures for women, and that means ultimately for both women and men. Although I can think of some medieval women or early modern writers, such as the fifteenth century Christine de Pizan, who combine in their writings a deep sense of women's present plight with a haunting vision of a more liberated and egalitarian future. The writings of South African feminist Olive Schreiner of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century express powerful appeals for the autonomy and independence of women, combined with a realization that men too have a role in bringing about the liberation of women.

Olive Schreiner lived from 1855 to 1920. Today celebrated as an early woman pioneer, she looked far beyond her own time. Her writings are suffused as much by Christian images and ideas as they are by Victorian rhetoric. Her ideal is a new woman and a new man, and a loving friendship between them. Fighting for the emancipation of women, her global concern for women everywhere was linked to the great themes of freedom and equality. Born into a Methodist missionary family on the borders of what was then Basutoland in South Africa, she had a German father and an English mother. Already in her late twenties she became known for her "Story of an African Farm" (1883). She also wrote powerful allegories such as "Three Dreams in a Desert" (1890) where she describes how during one of her travels on horseback across the hot African plain, she came to rest under a mimosa tree, where she had a series of visionary dreams about the changing fate of woman.

The first dream describes two figures with heavy loads on their back—one is a woman lying heavily burdened *on the ground*, unable to move; the other is a man *standing* beside her. The narrator explains that whilst in the past woman once wandered free by the side of man, woman was yoked long ago by the "Age-of-dominion-of-muscular-force" and subjected by man with "the broad band of Inevitable

Necessity." Woman has carried this burden for centuries with patience and tears, but with wisdom too. She knows she cannot move with the burden on her back, but "the knife of Mechanical Invention" has now cut the "Inevitable Necessity" once and for all. Woman can now slowly rise up, but man cannot help her and does not understand her struggle. Though woman is still weak, she slowly staggers on to her knees, gets up and begins to walk.

In the second dream the woman has arrived at the steep bank of a river, seeking the "Land of Freedom." She is told that the only way to this land is down "the banks of Labor" and "through the waters of Suffering." The old man Reason instructs her that in order to cross the dangerous waters of the river, the woman must leave behind a small, winged male child whom she has carried all along asleep on her breast. The woman wants to take the child with her so that he will grow up in the "Land of Freedom" and offer her friendship instead of passion. But Reason insists that the suckling man-child must stay behind in order to learn to open his wings and fly to the "Land of Freedom" by himself and grow into a man. The woman realizes that she is utterly alone in her fight with the elements, but in the far distance she hears the sound of thousands and thousands of feet which will one day follow her track, and the bodies of these women to come will form a bridge over the river across which the entire human race can pass. Inspired by this hope the woman takes up the struggle with the turbulent waters.

The third, concluding dream briefly describes the coming true of this hope, which Olive Schreiner sees as a free land with free people:

I dreamed I saw a land. And on the hills walked brave women and brave men, hand in hand. And they looked into each other's eyes and they were not afraid.

And I saw the women also hold each other's hands. And I said to him beside me, "What place is this?" and he said, "This is heaven." And I said, "Where is it?" And he answered, "On earth." And I said, "When shall these things be?" And he answered, "IN THE FUTURE."

Clothed in the imagery of nineteenth century industrialism, Olive Schreiner's South African dreams con-

tain a strong prophetic and Christian visionary element, reminding us of the freedom in the Garden of Eden, the freedom from fear before the Fall. But the woman's struggle is especially symbolic of contemporary women seeking liberation, equality, freedom, and friendship between both women and men.

Although different in language and style from our own discourse a century later, these dreams can still resonate with us and link up with some central themes in contemporary feminist theology. A hundred years later we still look for prophetic visions of the future, for a better world, a world free from oppression, violence and fear, a world of equality, peace and justice. It is the visionary and prophetic as much as the practical concerns which fuel much of the passion and commitment of contemporary feminist theologians around the world. Let me therefore now consider some of the concerns of feminist theology developed so far.

A field of rich diversity: Feminist theological perspectives from around the world

Since women have gained access to theological education and have become theologically literate, they have developed critical tools for the analysis of traditional theological teachings, so much rooted in a patriarchal and androcentric worldview. Far from being just a western development, feminist theology is situated and occurs in a global context today.¹⁷ Christian women around the world are engaging in and doing theology in a new way. Whereas in the past there was a silence and invisibility of women in theology, there is now a new awakening of women in church life and theological thinking. Women are no longer simply objects of theology studied by men; they are subjects, practitioners and producers of theology.

Feminist theology has already fanned out into a several specialized fields of studies, but the term "feminist theology" is far too monolithic and restrictive for what is happening among Christian women

around the whole world. The voices of women are heard in public everywhere. This new awakening at a global level is a true *novum* in human history and consciousness. Women are *doing* theology, reflecting theologically on their experience, struggling against oppression, exclusion and marginalization, applying a hermeneutic of suspicion to traditional theological sources and teachings. In difference to "feminist theology" the term "women's theology" is wider, more inclusive of many women's activities within church communities. It can be applied more easily worldwide than the more specialized, more academic term "feminist theology." All women's theology tries to overcome the *theological apartheid*, which has existed between men and women for most of Christian history. Thus it is not surprising that some commentators today consider the development of women's theology one of the most creative and promising developments in contemporary Christianity, closely linked to new experiments and understandings in spirituality.

As a new academic field, feminist theology first emerged during the late 1960s and 70s, and since the early 1980s Christian feminists have created a wide range of local and global networks which encourage and strengthen the mutual sharing of experiences and debate. During a mere quarter of a century feminist theology has gained so much in quality and momentum that one can only be amazed. Feminist theology has truly come into its own, as is evident from the new academic posts in many theological faculties and colleges. Parallel to this exists a fast growing number of publications, journals, conferences, meetings and planning groups of all kinds and at different academic and practical levels. Christian women around the world are doing theology in a new way, though often against many odds, but in a new context and with a new consciousness.

It is impossible to suggest a simple, unequivocal definition of what feminist theology is, apart from the fact that it is born out of women's experience and commitment, and involves advocacy and engagement. Feminist theology is a new, critical way of doing theology which is not imprisoned by traditional

¹⁷ See the survey on the different geographical, religious and theoretical sites of the feminist struggle provided by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland, eds., "Feminist Theology in Different Contexts", *Concilium* 1996/1 (London: SCM Press and Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books).

disciplinary boundaries, but characterized by multidisciplinary, and it is a new way of doing theology rooted in praxis, just as political, contextual and liberation theology are. Born out of the struggle to overcome the oppression and subordination of women, feminist theologies are linked to a powerful vision of equality, justice, liberation and hope, rooted in a faith that knows of redemptive transformation and wholeness of being. Doing such theology out of the perspective of praxis, the concrete socio-economic and personal histories of individual women in different parts of the world, in many different communities and churches, means that it can only occur in contexts of radical plurality. There is no one, single, universal feminist theology; there are only feminist theologies in the plural, celebrating diversity and differences. But this does not mean rampant individualism and utter fragmentation. However different, feminist theologies around the world possess certain commonalties and shared patterns, raise similar questions and invite an engaged, practical response. Whilst rejoicing over how far we have come on our journey, we can also discern some shortcomings and failings, and at the same time we can also imagine how far we still have to travel before some of the hopes and ideals are fully realized in practice.

Feminist theologies are so thoroughly pluralistic and open-ended because women's experiences, actions and reflections, their ways of doing theology with each other and within communities, are so diverse, resulting in new discourses, strategies, visions and transformative actions, all of which are in the plural. The contexts, which gave and give birth to feminist theologies are diverse and plural too. The dynamic interaction of both the local and global contexts must be especially underlined, for it would be quite wrong to see feminist theology as only a white, western, urban, middle-class phenomenon. On the contrary, the conscientization of women across different churches, religions, cultures, peoples and races is now globally observable. Feminist theologies worldwide are part of the globalization of ideas, of the experience of our global *oikumene* as *one household of life*, where women are interlinking and encircling the globe and seeking wholeness together. Women of different Christian churches, women of different faiths, secular women, women experiencing

poverty and oppression, women workers and women thinkers can be touched by women's new theological thinking that seeks transformation of the world.

This rich plurality of contexts is not only created by diverse experiential, cultural and geographical settings, but also by the different histories of women's struggle and women's education, their different methods of articulation and self-reflective critical analysis, and their different energies in formulating and enacting an emancipatory, liberating and transformative praxis. I hope these remarks make clear how feminist theology, even when referred to in the singular, is not so much a discipline than a field, an activity which involves the breaking open of theology into plural visions and voices, the counter voices of women which have existed in the past, but were muted or suppressed, which have now come out to affirm alternative theological insights by deconstructing traditional readings of texts and histories, by recovering the lost experiences of women and by constructing a more inclusive theology. Feminist theological ideas have spread across the globe through diffusion and association—from North America to Europe, to Latin America, Asia and Africa. Scattered like seeds these ideas have been taken up by Christian women around the world and have produced new growth, a sharing of ideas that are bearing rich fruits. This has been achieved through theological education for women, through travel especially the publication of numerous theological texts, and through encounter, dialogue, and conferences, especially the pioneering work of women in EATWOT, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.

Women's hermeneutic of suspicion has rendered the long-established theological understanding of God, the human being, and the world problematic. This leads to a critical re-assessment of all theological work, whether in exegesis, doctrine, ethics, ecclesiology, church history or other fields. We have now arrived at a stage where there are already, in North America at least, two generations of feminist theological scholars. Whereas the first generation was self-trained and had to create feminist theology as it went along, the second-generation women have had feminist teachers themselves. The term "feminist theology" is now primarily applied to studies of the Christian tradition, whereas earlier it was used more generally in connection with all feminist critical studies of religion.

I only use feminist theology in this sense, as referring to Christianity rather than all the other religions and I will therefore not take into account the development of "theology" which is concerned with women's spirituality and the worship of the Goddess.¹⁸ It is important, though, to realize the growth and extent of the field of feminist theology in terms of its stronger focus and its new generation of women theologians. This will make all the difference, for what was once a novelty, a breakthrough and a breakaway, will eventually become established in its own right, as a new praxis wedded to new intellectual and academic traditions.

In brief, the field feminist theology is concerned with questions of feminist biblical scholarship, about Christian scriptural texts and tradition and raise questions about authority—the authority of the past, the authority of the church, the authority of women's experience—and the very difficult question about what of the past remains usable in the present, and whether patriarchy is inevitable or reformable. The emphasis on women's experience connects up with the development of narrative theology, a narrative related to and rooted in women's lives, but it also suggests new theological topics not treated before and can be seen as a form of contextual theology as well as liberation theology. Being a feminist whilst still remaining a Christian is a great existential challenge, and many women wrestle with the question of how to resolve the tension between the two and hold in balance two mutually enriching experiences and perspectives.

Stages on the journey

Helpful signposts on the journey are given to us by in specific texts, but also through key ideas. Let us look at some texts first. The extraordinary plurality of femi-

nist theologies is one of their strengths, which must be given explicit recognition. It is acknowledged in the titles of some publications, though not in all. Thus it is interesting to look at some recently published texts as "signposts" of the journey thus far, illustrating publicly what has been achieved in the field of feminist theologies which has now gained enough volume and critical mass for summaries, dictionaries and critical appraisals to appear ever more frequently.

Enough new knowledge has been generated to make possible the publication of comprehensive dictionaries. First in the field was the German *Wörterbuch der feministischen Theologie*, published in 1991 and soon to come out in a second, enlarged addition during its tenth anniversary year.¹⁹ This helpful reference work contains substantial essays on key concepts and developments, written with few exceptions by women theologians from Germany, Switzerland and Austria. It provides a somewhat different and much needed complementary perspective to the publications in English, which dominate the feminist theological debate.

During 1996 two dictionaries were published in English, one in England—*An A to Z of Feminist Theology*,²⁰ the other in the United States—*Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. The majority of articles in *An A to Z of Feminist Theology* are written by British women, though some contributions from abroad are also included, with a helpful cumulative bibliography at the end of the book. This reference work is very accessible for a first orientation and contains material not found in the German dictionary, such as entries on "Asian Women's Hermeneutical Principle", "Empowerment", "Interfaith Dialogue", as well as articles on "Gender", on "Methodology", and many others.

The North American publication *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* is the largest, the most international in

¹⁸ I have discussed these themes elsewhere; see my book *Women and Spirituality. Voices of Protest and Promise* (London: Macmillan, second edition 1993) and some of the contributions to my edited volume on *Religion and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). See also Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess. The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

¹⁹ See Elisabeth Gössmann, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Herlinde Pissarek-Hudelist, Ina Praetorius, Luise Schottroff, Helen Schüngel-Straumann, eds, *Wörterbuch der feministischen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1991).

²⁰ See Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan, eds, *An A to Z of Feminist Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

its list of contributors, and the most wide-ranging in its approach and entries. It explicitly acknowledges the existing diversity of feminist theologies in its title and maintains its thoroughly pluralistic perspective also in its entries on "Methodologies" and "Feminist Theories". There is much to be found here not captured by the other two dictionaries, such as "Gender Construction", "Gendered Institutions", "Gender Representation, and "Theology", besides many other topics. "Theologies, Contemporary" are in the plural, and so are "Theologies of Liberation" and "Theologies, Evangelical", but it seems odd that this plurality is not acknowledged for "Spirituality", even though several articles deal with different historical and contemporary forms of spirituality, including "Spirituality, Women's". This difference in treatment between "theologies" in the plural and "spirituality" in the singular raises the question of how far spirituality is still approached in an essentialist perspective rather than in a thoroughly historicized and contextualized framework. Another very helpful reference work is the two-volume encyclopedia on *Women and World Religion* edited by Serinity Young.²¹ Although not primarily concerned with feminist theology, it contains many articles, which have a bearing on this field.

Overviews of the development of feminist theologies are not only available in dictionaries, but through specialized articles, journals and anthologies, which document in increasing numbers the fast growing extent of this field, still largely unknown before the 1980s. The earliest regular journal, still in existence, is the Asian publication *In God's Image*, published since 1982. Internationally, the academic debate about feminist theologies is well reflected in the North American *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, pub-

lished since 1985, which is concerned with feminist theologies in the wider, more comprehensive sense mentioned earlier. Then there is also the younger British journal of *Feminist Theology*, which has appeared since September 1992.

These journals are complemented by several anthologies of which I shall only mention the three largest. Ann Loades edited *Feminist Theology: A Reader* in 1990, but this deals only with western developments.²² To supplement this perspective through non-western writings I was asked to edit *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* in 1994²³ already referred to earlier. Most recently, in 1996, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza edited *The Power of Naming*, a selection of articles on feminist liberation theologies published over the years in the international theology journal *Concilium*²⁴ that has regularly devoted specific issues to feminist theological themes since 1985. The 1996 issue of this journal²⁵ carries the title *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts* and provides an overview of recent international developments thematized in terms of "struggle." At the planning state, this number was to be entitled more pluralistically as "Feminist Theologies in a Global Context," but for reasons unknown to me the editors changed the plural into the singular "feminist theology" and pluralized the "contexts." The overall organizing focus for the themes from around the world are the "sites of struggle," perceived as different geographical, religious and theoretical sites of struggle, religious vision articulated by feminist theologies in different global contexts.

At a certain level it may not be all that important whether one speaks of feminist theology and its wider context in the singular or plural. The fluidity of usage may point to the dynamic growth and youthfulness of

²¹ Serinity Young, ed., *Women and World Religion* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1999).

²² Ann Loades, ed., *Feminist Theology: A Reader* (London: SPCK and Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

²³ Ursula King, ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (London: SPCK and Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

²⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *The Power of Naming. A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1996).

²⁵ See *Concilium* 1996/1.

the field; it may also hide an uncertainty or lack of agreement among its various practitioners and thus show that a definite, commonly agreed terminology has not been established yet. Nor may that be desirable either.

If we now look at some key ideas, which have signaled the direction of the feminist journey, then the words "oppression," "struggle" and "liberation" come to mind. But I do not think that feminist theologies should only be conceptualized in terms of "struggle" and "liberation." Whereas I can agree with the description of feminist theology as a non-traditional way of doing theology which is not imprisoned by traditional disciplinary boundaries, and in which liberation is of central concern, feminist theologies are not only liberation theologies, but include complex patterns of transformation in all areas of praxis and theory. The language of struggle and resistance is too antagonistic at times; it disempowers and makes dependent rather than energizes. I refuse to see myself working as a victim rather than a creative agent, and protest against some of the inauthentic consciousness and arrogant rhetoric present in some feminist theological writing. Like some secular feminists, I prefer to emphasize more the active perspective of resistance and agency rather than the passive perspective of being an oppressed victim. It is a matter of choice, as well as critical strategy, whether one wishes to emphasize hope, empowerment, and transformative potential, or underline instead oppression, struggle and liberation as key concepts and features of feminist theology.

In other words, it is important to get away from a perception exclusively focused on struggle. I agree with those who emphasize the richness, depth, commitment, power of vision and spiritual energy that form the heart and blood of feminist theologizing. At the same time we need to acknowledge the deeply haunting presence of *ambivalence* and *ambiguity* which runs through all attempts of interpretation and existential transformations. These afflict human endeavors everywhere with deep resonance of contingency, incom-

pleteness, and ultimate dissatisfaction, and feminist theological efforts are no exception to this. This experience is currently enhanced by the interrogative mode of the post-modern approach, which, to some, appears deeply disempowering. Yet it can also be perceived as utterly challenging by inviting and encouraging a profoundly transformative new creativity in living, being and thinking. It seems almost like the "wilderness experience" of which some womanist theologians speak and, as wilderness often does, this can lead to a transformative new spiritual vision.²⁶

Thus, on closer examination, many contradictory patterns can be revealed as hidden substructures present within the developing field of feminist theology. Nowhere is this perhaps more true than in the claims of a post-Christian feminist theology. It has of course been said many times that contemporary feminism is a form of postmodernism, that feminist diversities have developed within the context of global modernities and are now taking part in the rejection of much, if not all, of that modernity. Yet it has also been pointed out that much of the debate about modernity and post-modernity²⁷ is locked into an entirely western vision which cannot sufficiently account for the genuine gains of modern social, political and economic developments from which many people in the world, and especially women, have gained a great deal.

What is the word "post" in any case meant to refer to in such compounds as postmodernism, post-patriarchal and post-Christianity? Is it primarily pointing to a sequence in time or to a substantive change, a qualitative difference that expresses greater inclusiveness, perfection or fullness? Or is it rather an expression of disintegration and decline, more a loss than a gain? These questions are too large to be debated here, but I want to mention that the notion of "post-Christianity" is now associated with multiple meanings and allows both positively and negatively charged interpretations. Many Christians, when they speak of "post-Christianity," often really

²⁶ See Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness. The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).

²⁷ I have looked in more detail at this debate in the Introduction to my edited book on *Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age* (London: Cassell, 1998: pp. 1-14).

mean "post-Church" as a critical rejection of an institution rather than the outright denial of Christianity itself. Even such a passionately argued book as Daphne Hampson's *After Christianity*²⁸ does not really answer the question of what might come after Christianity and only makes sense from a particular, concrete perspective which is perhaps more rooted in a historical, conceptual and ethnic ghetto mentality than in a genuine Christian universalism and catholicity which are the hallmark of certain forms of Christian denominational and global interfaith ecumenism.

In spite of all that has been achieved there is still a need for feminist theologians to get out of their own isolation—whether institutionally imposed or intellectually adopted—and develop a more dialogical approach, not only among themselves in different parts of the world or with women of many different faith traditions, but also through reflecting from their experience of solidarity and sisterhood on some of the burning questions of our times. In the areas of ethics and ecology, of justice and peace, and of spirituality, this is already happening. But feminist theologians are at present still little explicitly engaged in or critically challenged by interfaith dialogue²⁹ nor are they concerned with the great debates between theology and science, nor are they particularly noted for efforts to rethink what kind of religious education is needed in the secular educational institutions of contemporary society.

Some of the liveliest debates, some of the most challenging encounters and dialogues are occurring today among the women theologians of the so-called Third World. It is by listening to their voices that we can discern much hope and vision, for it is amidst their struggles and pain that we see the greatest transformation, a New World being born.

Visions of hope and empowerment: spirituality of and for life

If doing feminist theology is about sharing experiences, then it is important to share with each other not only those of oppression, resistance and struggle, but also those of hope and empowerment, mutually enriching new awareness and affirmation. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the empowering effect, which Christian feminist theology has on women in different parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America.³⁰

The concept of empowerment has been widely used in the development debate and refers to the powerless or disempowered gaining a greater share in the control over resources and decision-making. Women are often the most disempowered in society, and their empowerment is associated with the struggle for social equality and greater justice, for a more just and peaceful world. But more than that, the word empowerment has come to mean in feminist writing the recognition of one's own inner capacities, one's strength and ability in going out and changing situations and social relations, in influencing and shaping not only one's own life, but also the world around us. It is also linked to a deeper spiritual experience in feeling more hopeful and strong, in being affirmed and encouraged by a greater spiritual power that enables us to grow, be healed and transformed.

Strong voices of empowerment that can give hope to others are found in many writings from women around the world. The affirmation of and struggle for life is a very central theme of the newly emerging spiritualities coming out of the religiously, culturally and ethnically pluralistic situations of the Third World. How inspiring and truly empowering and hopeful these

²⁸ See Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996). A more extensive discussion of the unsatisfactoriness of her views is found in my review of this book in *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, vol. 18, nr 2, 1997, pp. 243–245.

²⁹ Feminist theological reflections on interfaith dialogue are still rare; see on this theme Kate McCarthy, "Women's Experience as Hermeneutical Key to a Christian Theology of Religions", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, vol. 6, nr 2 (1996), pp. 163–173; also my article "Feminism: The missing dimension in the dialogue of religions" in John D'Arcy May, ed., *Pluralism and the Religions* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp. 40–55.

³⁰ See the earlier publication by Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds, *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), followed since by many other theological publications from women in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

spiritualities for life are can be gauged from the publication *Women Resisting Violence. Spirituality for Life*³¹ which resulted from the international women's meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, held in Costa Rica in December 1994, bringing together for the first time women theologians from the Third World with those from the First World.

Dialogue is getting more diverse and complex among women around the world and, increasingly, more discerning and critical voices are being heard. To give two examples: The Finnish woman theologian Elina Vuola has brought feminist theology and liberation theology in South America into dialogue, pointing out that the methodological principle of praxis has very definite limits in not tackling burning issues of sexual ethics as part of liberation in Latin America.³² In her general assessment of "Feminist theologies in the plural" she writes: "In the 1990s, feminist theology has grown into a worldwide, global ecumenical movement. There are feminist theologians in all major religious traditions, including non-Christian. This globalization of feminist theology has been a process similar to that of liberation theology. It is a process of simultaneous globalization and particularization. A false abstract universalism is replaced by particularism and concrete universalism."³³

Another assessment of the diversity and obstacles of doing feminist theology as "multicultural theology" comes from Linda Moody who sees women's theology today as being a "theology across boundaries of difference" where women's theological reflections and the dialogue about their experiences move in terms of both commonalities and differences which counteract a falsely constructed unity and an imposed singular world view that obliterates real differences.³⁴

Third World women have a double struggle—they struggle against the oppressive patriarchy of Third

World men as well as against what has been called the racism of the feminists of the First World. The context and struggle of Third World women highlights the interlocked nature of oppression: issues of sexism, race, class, and colonialism are closely interwoven in women's experience. What is remarkable is the speed and efficiency with which Third World women theologians have networked with each other and organized themselves.

Much of women's theology in the Third World shares the same context as that of male Third World theologians, but it also has its own specific characteristics. Women are doing theology out of their own experience, and this experience is often different from that of their men folk. As the Korean woman theologian Chung Hyun Kyung has said, she wants to do theology in a way that her mother can understand. Women's experiences of poverty, oppression, violence and pain—what the Mexican theologian Elsa Tamez has called "the power of the naked"—provide much of the context of this.

After acquiring advanced theological education and traditional academic degrees, often obtained in the West, Third World women theologians are "seeing theology with new eyes." They apply their theological thinking to their own context, which leads them to develop new methods and insights. They are not interested in creating theological systems, or a new systematic, constructive theology produced by an individual theological thinker who claims name and fame for it. Much of their theological work arises out of community, that of their different churches and that of networking with other women. Thus many statements are worked out collaboratively rather than by individuals alone. The experience of participating and working in community seems to be more developed than among most western women theologians who often tend to work in the same individual-

³¹ See Mary John Mananzan et al, eds, *Women Resisting Violence. Spirituality for Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996).

³² See Eline Vuola, *Limits of Liberation. Praxis as Method in Latin American Liberation Theology and Feminist Theology* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1997).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁴ See Linda A. Moody, *Women Encounter God. Theology across Boundaries of Difference* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996).

istic and competitive style as their male colleagues. Such a strong community context also affects the style and content of individual women writers. Women theologians in the Third World have developed a tremendous resilience and strength through new bonding. Their critique of oppression and inequality, and of an oppressive patriarchal theology, is truly radical and transformative. But it is not confrontational, for it remains in dialogue with others. Its character can be aptly summarized as "gentle but radical."³⁵

Until recently theological reflection was almost exclusively undertaken by men. In María Clara Bingemer's view, shared by many other women doing theology around the globe, this one-sided, partial theology "has lacked the desire, the heart, the body, and the head of a woman to enable it to be more fully itself, to enable new treasures to be discovered and brought to birth out of the womb of God's word, so that the image of god—man and woman—could be more perfectly revealed and made known." Bingemer argues strongly that the challenge of women doing theology is the "challenge to *restore the primacy of desire within theological discourse*," which is for her a desire "that inflames and summons, that keeps alight, not consumes, the flame of love in the face of everything that threatens to extinguish it."³⁶

Speaking in quite a different voice, the Korean woman theologian Chung Hyun Kyung refers critically to the "violence of abstraction" so characteristic of western theology. She describes a new and very different understanding of theology arising out of the popular life and experience of the people. This theology is a cry, a plea, an invocation, a vision quest, an embodied, critical reflection which is not primarily

"God-talk," but "God-praxis."³⁷ This is a spiritual task as much as a theological one.

New theological insights among women theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, from minority groups in North America and elsewhere, relate to new ways of approaching the Bible, new ways of reflecting on Jesus, Mary and the church, new ways of celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments and new ways of experiencing the living God. Closely interwoven with all these developments is a newly emerging spirituality. There exists both an implicit and explicit spiritual dimension in the contemporary women's movement as a whole. In fact, the development of the women's movement, the liveliness and dynamic of its debate, the rich diversity of women's voices, can be read as signs of the spiritual creativity of our culture, as pointers to new horizons and new sources of transformative empowerment. In Latin America women's search for spirituality in the midst of poverty, oppression and injustice has been described as a "Cry for Life," a new way of acting in the power of the Spirit.³⁸

The Hispanic women in the United States, who call themselves simply *mujeristas*, coined the challenging expression *spirituality as a struggle for life*. This is rich with resonance, a vibrant, thought-provoking statement that invites unpacking. It is as simple as it is bold. Spirituality for these women is not something apart from, over and above the life we ordinarily live and wrestle with. For these women spirituality is not something which occurs only in a specifically religious context, set apart by sacred time and space, surrounded by institutional walls and mental categories of separation which make it a safe haven or distant island rarely visited and difficult to reach.

³⁵ This is the title of the documentary film made by the WCC about the work of the Korean woman theologian Chung Hyun Kyung.

³⁶ The quotations are taken from her article "Women in the Future of the Theology of Liberation" in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds, *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 473-90.

³⁷ See Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again. Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1990; London: SCM Press, 1991), chapter 7 where she discusses a new understanding of theology and of the identity of theologians.

³⁸ See María Pilar Aquino, *Our Cry for Life. Feminist Theology from Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).

On the contrary, spirituality is a force of survival, a creative, inspiring power to struggle and resist; it is like daily food and sustenance in the struggle to overcome violence and oppression, to achieve transformation and wholeness. But women's spirituality is not only a struggle *for* life—to find more life and a better life, and find it abundantly—it is also a spirituality *of* life through which women are nourished by the process and energies of life itself, through new birth and further growth. Such a spirituality *of* and *for* life is continually strengthened and renewed through our experiences of work and struggle from which we can draw spiritual insight and new energy if we but learn how to be spiritually transformed by everything that comes into our life.

Such transformation requires that spirituality is no longer considered a luxury for a few, for an educated elite and leisured class, for religious specialists and believers. At this point in history, spirituality is a necessity for all if we want to create a human world of peace and justice while safeguarding the integrity of creation. It is perhaps less important to define exactly *what spirituality* is than what it does—to us, to our communities, to the world around us. In listening to the voices around the world—whether the voices of women, the voices from the Third World or the voices of spiritual seekers from different religious traditions—we have to learn to be responsive to multiple otherness. We have to take responsibility for the other and for each other in mutuality. Understanding spirituality in such an all-embracing, comprehensive sense brings into play personal, political and global concerns. Such spirituality, which truly liberates the spirit, implies the promise of fullness and freedom, of wholeness and redemption for all humankind and all of creation. Such an understanding is close to many eco-theological concerns, for it is

a spirituality that is cosmically rooted in all of life and ultimately embraces the whole of the earth. It is marked by interconnectedness at all levels, so that reality is experienced as an immense web rather than a hierarchical pyramid of being.

Where will feminist theologies be in the next ten to fifteen years? This is hard to predict. Much has been accomplished; much can now be critically assessed, sifted through and transformed under the challenge of more diversity and greater refinement, of further networking and restructuring. The task is both a practical and intellectual one; it represents a tremendous challenge and a great opportunity for women to bear witness to the transformative power of faith by taking up theological education and by becoming theological educators themselves. In the global voices and visions of empowerment now emerging from women's own theologizing, we can discover alternative ways of living, thinking and believing, opening up new paths and different possibilities for theological education in the future.

Theological education in a new millennium and a New World—a different time and place from the worlds of the past—faces some extraordinary challenges: the challenge of gender, of interdisciplinarity and interfaith encounter and the challenge of globality. Engendering theology is an urgent task and requires much transformation of traditional theological perspectives and approaches. This can only be achieved through women and men working closely together, by integrating their respective experiences and ways of thinking in a new manner. This requires working as friends and partners in communion empowered by the powers of love, the presence and fire of the spirit. The hope for and possibility of such *communio* offers a vision of great hope for the churches and the world.



*Dr. Diane Treacy-Cole,
who presented the paper of
Dr. Ursula King*

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM: A REGIONAL REPORT – ASIA

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In what specific ways have Feminist perspectives in theology been introduced in the curriculum in schools, at what stage, and how long?

Responding to the specific question given to me, I created a questionnaire to be sent to my friends who work at Lutheran theological schools in Asian and Pacific countries. I received responses from five women of five different countries. In the following I will list the answers after my question. The answers are arranged in alphabetical order of the names of the countries: Australia (A), Hong Kong (H), India (I), Japan (J) and Malaysia (M). I need to mention that in some cases I received papers written or spoken on different occasions by these women and I picked up their answers from them. In the case of Malaysia, all the answers were picked up from her paper: "The Prospect of Feminist Theology in Malaysian Seminaries." Otherwise the name of the paper is referred to at the end of each answer.

***Feminist Hermeneutics of the Biblical Texts
(from 2002)***

Both are elective courses.

(M) No Malaysian theological seminary includes Women's/Feminist Theology in the curriculum. None

of the lecturers has been trained in this field. (A program for the students' wives to learn leadership skills as well as biblical knowledge has been offered since January 2000.)

1. Please identify the names of the courses in your school in which feminist perspectives have been surely introduced (since when)?

(A) Feminist theology is included in a subject on **Philosophy and Hermeneutics** (since 2001). It was the first time that all students explicitly cover feminist hermeneutics.

(H) The only course in which the feminist perspective is clearly presented is in **Feminist Theology**. The course in Feminist Theology was first taught in the middle of the 1990s and has since been taught every second year. A feminist perspective is included in other courses that I teach.

(I) **Women in Religion and Society**: for the Bachelor of Divinity students (since 1985). It is a 5 credit course mandatory for all students.

(J) **Gender Issues and Spirituality in the Bible** (since 1995)

2. Identify courses in which feminist perspectives are probably introduced?

(A) Some lecturers in both the Biblical Studies and Systematics stream include feminist concerns as integral parts of their courses. Other lecturers raise feminist concerns and feminist theology in a more negative light.

Previously feminist hermeneutics was covered as part of a subject entitled "Ways of Interpreting Scriptures", which was offered as part of the BA.Th, the degree course for lay students, not as part of BTh, the degree course for pastoral ministry students.

(H) I think that some examples of feminist interpretation are included, occasionally in some of the courses about the Old Testament or the New Testament exegeses.

(I) This depends on the teacher concerned.

Since 1998 we have been offering a Master of Theology in Women's Studies and all the courses offered through this department are obviously feminist in perspective. There are courses on Feminist Theories and Methodology, Feminist Theology and Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics, Women and the Church, Women in Religious Traditions, Women and the Family, Women Economy and Ecology, Women's Movements, Women and the Media.

(J) Little concern has been paid in any course.

(M) When the well-trained lecturer in this field begins teaching courses, we will be able to offer such courses. The syllabi have to be revised and the feminist perspective and stances be included so that the teacher is compelled to present the perspective.

(H) If there is at least one fulltime feminist theologian teacher in a school, she can start making impacts on any phase of curriculum, training or modeling. Feminist theology is not only an independent discipline, but is to be integrated into every area of theology. Feminist theology is a subset. If teachers say it is impossible to integrate feminist perspectives in their courses, it proves that their teaching is not gender-balanced, but biased by the male-centered mentality. Courses co-taught from different perspectives may help students see theologies in broader horizons.

(M) To explore what programs are appropriate, how to equip faculty members to teach this subject, and how to encourage and share resources with one another, we encourage those faculty members who are interested to integrate the women's issues in their courses. For example, issues of ordination of women, women's full participation in the church ministry, and partnership in the church in Pastoral Ministry courses; changing roles of men and women at home, in church and society in the Adult Ministry classes; development of the feminist movement in the Church History courses. We collect books on feminist theology in the library and encourage local publications so that students can read in their own language.

Overview

Even among the five Asian and Pacific countries, the situations vary greatly and it is difficult to speak about the Asian and Pacific situation as such. From the responses and papers I received, it is obvious that each woman has made a great effort to offer feminist theological perspectives as she teaches her course/s. On the other hand, it seems true to say that the feminist perspectives have not yet succeeded in putting deep roots in the curriculum and in the life of the schools. In Malaysia it seems a dire need to train young women to be teachers at the school, though other countries may have the same problem. Thirdly, it should be emphasized that experiences of women's pain and discrimination in each context are cause for much concern. Such experiences are not limited to women, but have much in common with those of the persons marginalized in any society as "others." Thus, a feminist perspective needs to be integrated into any area of theology to create gender-balanced theology. More full time feminist theologian teachers are needed to engage in teaching in the various theological areas to help raise consciousness in the teaching staff as well as students. In the case of India, there are 6 full time women teachers and two part-time or visiting professors out of a total of 24 members on the faculty. In the case of Australia, the lived experience of women at the seminary may not reflect the vision of the Seminary that rejects "clerical elitism which sees theology as reserved for pastors alone." The discrepancy may present us more challenge and direction for growth.

Contributors:

Dr Allie Ernst Luther Seminary, Australia

Dr Birgitta Larsson, Lutheran Theological Seminary,
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Dr Monica Melanchthon, Gurukul Lutheran Theological
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Dr Pang Ken Phin, Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia

Dr Hisako Kinukawa, Japan Lutheran Theological
Seminary, Japan

Papers as reference:

"Luther Seminary" by Allie Ernst

"Feminist Theology as Challenge to Theological Education" by Birgitta Larsson

"Women in Theological Education Exercising Power and
Embracing Responsibility" by Monica J. Melanchthon

"Feminist Perspectives: Ecumenical Theological Education in Japan," Ministerial Formation, 90, July 2000

Information on

a) Women's ordination

b) Women students in theology at each school

(A)

a) It was discussed publicly for the first time at the last general synod of the LCA, in 1999, and a vote was taken. Results were split evenly, both at general pastors' conference and at general synod.

b) Women comprise only approx. 10% of students studying theology. (This figure excludes the

teacher education stream, in which 66% students are women.)

(H)

a) 6 Lutheran churches ordain women.

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong: in the very beginning of the 1990s 15 ordained (out of the 60 clergy). President of the church is a woman, Rev Josephine Tso.

- Hong Kong & Macau Lutheran Church: from the middle of the 1990s 3 or 4 ordained.

- Chinese Rhenish C & Tsung Tsin Mission: the first women were ordained only a couple of years ago

b) 50 women out of 100 full time students in theology

(I)

a) UELCI has passed it, but some member churches are still to implement it. 4 out of 11 Lutheran churches ordain women since the early 1990s. About 30 ordained.

b) 27 out of 140 students in theology are women.

(J)

a) Since 1970. 6 ordained.

b) 10 out of 27

(M)

a) Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) passed it in 1983 and implemented in 1986. 9 ordained. 44% of total clergy (65) are women. Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) Passed resolution to ordain women in 1994 and implemented in 1995. 5 ordained.

b) 28 out of 75 are women students.



*Dr Susan McArver, USA
(left) with
Dr Peri Rasolondraibe
(right)*

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM: A REGIONAL UPDATE – AFRICA

Dr Isabel Apawo PHIRI
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The up-date of the African Region on feminist perspectives in transforming the theological curriculum is based on my experiences from the Universities of Malawi, Cape Town, Namibia, Durban-Westville and Natal. It is supplemented by the perceptions of African women theologians from the universities of South Africa, Fort Hare, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Malawi. Each woman consulted is a member of the Circle of African Women Theologians (hereafter the Circle).

The Circle was launched in 1989 in Accra, Ghana after a realization that there were very few African women theologians. There were also very few books written by African women theologians. The African male theologians did not address women issues adequately when theologizing from the African context. The majority of the African male theologians see themselves as spokespersons for African women. Others shun from addressing feminist perspectives in African theology because in their minds, feminism is associated with Western women. There was also an absence of the experiences of African women in Western feminist Theology and African American womanist theology because, apart from the fact that all women suffer from patriarchy, the levels of oppression are different due to our different contexts.

The establishment of the Circle and the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture was an at-

tempt to address the gaps. The Circle and the Institute are the brain-child of Mercy Oduyoye and Brigalia Bam. The majority of African Women Theologians who are members of the Circle have now caught the vision. The Circle has embarked on a project to contribute literature to the theological world. Therefore it aims at encouraging African women to study theology so that they can play an active role in theological research and generating publications by African women on issues that affect African women in African religions and culture. This has resulted in the establishment of African Women Theologies as a distinctive area of academic study in African Theological Institutions.

The issues of African women theologians are the same as those of feminist theologies globally. The Circle ensures the study of feminist theology in Africa should include African women's experiences of African Traditional Religion, Islam, Mission Christianity, African Christianity, colonialism, apartheid, post colonialism, poverty, wars, globalization, etc. Therefore the members of the Circle seek the survival of African women in the midst of negative forces that come from patriarchy in African culture and religions.

They also facilitate the collection of all the books, journals, articles, unpublished research

(long essays, dissertations, thesis, etc) written by African women theologians and place them in specific theological centers in Africa to be used by the students of theology. Center for Constructive Theology in Durban, South Africa, St Paul's theological seminary in Kenya, the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture at Legon Theological College in Ghana are some of the places where libraries are being developed to facilitate the study of African women theologies.

The members of the Circle are also involved in the role of advocacy for the inclusion of studies on women in religion and culture in theological institutions and faculties of humanities at universities and seminaries. Africa in general has few African theologians. It has taken a very long time to Africanize the teaching of theology and Religious Studies through the inclusion of the study of the major African religions. Up to now, especially in some South African theological institutions, one can study theology without reading books written by Africans or studying African theology. African women theologians who are teaching in any discipline in theological institutions are much less than African male theologians. In the "South African," Maluleke has observed correctly that:

Theological Education should not be a 'job' reserved for males—white or Black. And yet to the best of my knowledge at the moment, the whole of South Africa has only one Black female Ph.D. graduate. Thirty years of Contextual, Liberation, African and Black Theology in South Africa could only produce one female Ph.D. graduate (and I am not suggesting that a Ph.D. is the be-all and end-all of theological education here). Yet both our churches and country have more women than men—makes you think, does it not?³⁹

Maluleke was writing in 1998 and since then the situation of Black female Ph.D. graduates in South Africa

has not changed. While there are deliberate moves to increase the number of male African theologians, that is not the case with African women theologians. Thanks to the efforts of the Ecumenical Theological Education of the World Council of Churches and the African Theological Initiative who have deliberately sought scholarships to promote doctoral theological studies of African women at a continental level. The limited numbers of African women theologians in African Theological Institutions has a bearing on the teaching of African women theologies.

I recognize the fact that not all African women theologians who are in theological institutions in Africa are concerned about women's issues. It is acknowledged here that those engaged in African women's theologies whether in the theological institutions at seminaries or in universities have a great variety in their approach. However, the limited number of those who are involved in advocacy for the inclusion of the study of African Women theologies, being a minority, are easily victimized. For example, individual institutions may decide to discourage certain types of research by the way they react to the dissemination of researched information. Any knowledge that threatens the status quo is viewed with suspicion. This is particularly true in the case of women and gender research conducted by African women theologians.⁴⁰ The victimization of individual African women theologians on the basis of their research is meant to deter others from pursuing their research in the same field.

The African women theologians who are researching on women issues face another challenge. For those who examine their disciplines from a women's perspective, feel constrained by the choice of subject matter and methodologies, and by lack of receptivity in their fields to women's topics, women's concerns, and women's scholarly insights. This is because feminism and gender analysis have departed from the conventional demands of scholarly discipline, ig-

³⁹ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke 'The Africanization of Theological Education: Does Theological Education Equip You to Help Your Sister?' In *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol. 4, No. 2 1998, 17.

⁴⁰ See I.A. Phiri, 'Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi' in Kenneth Ross (eds.) *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratisation in Theological Perspective*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996, 63–105.

noring the established boundaries between academic disciplines. It is the contrast in content and method between conventional and feminist research that has caused tension and misunderstandings between genders in appreciating each other's field of study. In the process of fighting for academic recognition other problems have arisen. These include devaluation of the field of study itself and refusal to use the materials from research in women and gender studies for teaching purposes in African universities.

The above-mentioned attitudes have not deterred the circle members from continuing with research and publications from women perspectives. The Pan-African Women Theologians Conference held from the 29th July to 3rd August 2001 at the University of Ghana, Legon showed that African women theologians have continued with research. The theme of the conference was 'Overcoming Violence—Women of Faith Speak.'

During the 1996–2003 period, the Circle has set up study commissions to research and publish on Women in African Traditional Religion and Culture; African Women and Biblical Hermeneutics; African Women and Theological Formation; and Biographies of Women of Faith.

Achievements of the Circle

Women from the Circle have generated a lot of publications since 1989. Some of the publications include the following:

Ackerman, D. Draper J.A., et al., Eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 1991.

Ackerman, D. Gateman, E. Cotze, H. and Tobler, J. Eds. *Claiming Our Foot Prints: South African Women Reflect on Context, Identity and Spirituality*. Stellenbosch: ESSA Institute for Theological and Interdisciplinary Research, 2000.

Akintunde, D.O. ed. *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2001.

Amoah, E. ed. *Where God Reigns: Reflections on Women in God's World*. Accra: Sam-Woode Ltd, 1997.

Amka: An Occasional newsletter of the Biennial Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture.

Dube, M.W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.

Dube, M.W. Ed. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and The Bible*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

Edet, R. and Umeagudosu M. Eds. *Life, Women and Culture: Theological reflections*. Lagos: African Heritage Research and Publications, 1990.

Gachiri, E.M. *Female Circumcision: With reference to the Agikuyu of Kenya*. Nairobi: Pauline publications, 2000.

Getui, M. and Wamue, G. Eds. *Violence against women*. Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1996.

Kanyoro, M.R. and Njoroge, N. *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the household of God*. Nairobi: Action publishers, 1996.

Kinoti, H.W. and Waruta, D. eds, *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Critical Essays in Missiological*. Nairobi: Uzima press, 1994.

Kinoti, H.W. and Waruta, D. Eds. *The Bible in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1997.

Landman, C. Ed. *Digging up our Foremothers*. Pretoria: UNISA, 1996.

Mbuy-Beya, B. *Woman Who Are You? A Challenge*. Nairobi: Paulines, 1998.

Nasimiyu-Wasike, A and D.W. Waruta Eds. *Mission in African Christianity: Critical Essays in Missiology*. Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1993.

Njoroge, N. *Kiama Kia Ngo: African Christian Feminist Ethic of Resistance and Transformation*. Legon: Assempa publishers, 2000.

Njoroge, N, and Dube, M. Eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001.

Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R Ed. *Taritha Qumi!* 1989 conference proceedings. Ibadan: Daystar, 1990.

Oduyoye, M.A. *Who will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.* Geneva: WCC, 1990.

Oduyoye M.A and Kanyoro M.R. Ed. *The will to Arise: Women tradition and the church in Africa.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992.

Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995.

Oduyoye, M.A. ed. *Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God: Proceedings of the Pan African*

Conference of the Circle of 1996. Accra: Sam-Woode Ltd., 1997.

Oduyoye, M.A. *Introducing African Women's Theology.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001.

Okule, T. *The Mother of Mission.* Cambridge: Cambridge Theological Federation, 1997.

Phiri, I.A. *Women Patriarchy and Presbyterianism: Chewa women of Central Malawi.* Blantyre: CLAIM, 1997.

Journal of Constructive Theology Vol. 5 No. 2, 1999 and Vol. 6. No. 2, 2001.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM: A REGIONAL UPDATE – LATIN AMERICA

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In regard to this intriguing topic, no study of the theological institutions in our region exists. To provide some sort of an overview—or, at best, a set of significant observations—I must draw on personal experience in an international, ecumenical theological school, and interaction with many colleagues in other institutions. Women professors in particular, from many schools in a variety of countries, have enlivened the dialogue on this subject over the last 3 decades.

Stages in a diverse and complex process

The incorporation of feminist perspectives in a theological curriculum comes about through a complex process of social change within an academic institution. It involves an evolution in the self-understanding of the patriarchal theological academy, as well as a fundamental change in everyday relations between men and women in an institution. In this new environment, women are no longer simply new colleagues in a male centered program, challenged to fit in as best they can. Instead, women professors challenge the established program itself, and the old colleagues learn (or fail to learn) how to refit themselves for the emerging theological panorama with its radically new focus.

This evolution is far from uniform across the region. Each institution carries its own baggage into the process, unpacks and repacks it, adds to it or discards things from it, according to the constraints of its own context and the abilities and sensibilities of its personnel. We will try, nevertheless, to identify a roughly common set of stages in the diverse experiences of institutions in our region.

An important constraint found in most of the institutions in our region can be identified as a conservative attitude toward the Bible, which, in the case of texts that mention relations between women and men, continues to produce literalistic interpretations and strict applications of that interpretation to people today. The patriarchal cultures reflected in biblical writings are often considered as the “biblical pattern” for Christian homes and churches.

Interest in “women’s issues” incorporated sporadically into the curriculum

Prior to the development of feminist consciousness as such, some women professors introduced a concern for the pastoral needs of women as specific

subjects in the churches and in society. Courses have sprung up with titles such as "Pastoral de la mujer" (an elastic term covering "pastoral work with/for/by women"). I will hazard a guess here that—at least in our first experiences as teachers of these courses—some of us may have viewed "women" as "other," because our academic training and professional standing led us to identify more with the masculine values of our society than with our own identity as women. However, as we learned more about the systematic oppression of women, and the violence against women fostered by our machista culture, we have deepened our understanding of the psychological barriers to self-esteem in women. Through these studies, with their analysis of lived experience, women professors are launched on a trajectory that leads to feminist consciousness.

At some institutions, interest in the area of women began not in the pastoral department but in the field of biblical studies. In this pre-theoretical period, the topic of "women" was singled out for study, and it was in the examination of biblical texts that theoretical questions took shape. These questions defined new issues for research in the sociology of biblical cultures as well as in use of new tools in literary criticism and hermeneutics. Here too, we can identify a launching pad for the trajectory toward feminist consciousness.

In 1974 the professors of theology and Bible of an interdenominational seminary in Costa Rica initiated a seminar course called "Women in Biblical Thought," and required the participation of all students in their final year as well as all the professors of the department (which included only one woman). Subsequently incorporated into the curriculum as a regular course, it was taught for several years by a team of two women professors, who developed feminist orientations within the course.

The inclusion of courses in feminist theology in the curriculum

From the standpoint of Latin American liberation theology, it is the experience of socio-economic

and political marginalization that forms the base on which the poor, and those who work in solidarity with them, construct a theology that has life-giving relevance in the midst of the devastating poverty and oppression that affect more than half the population. Within this framework, additional exclusions based on sex, race and ethnic identity have come into focus. Feminist theology is therefore considered as part of an overall project of liberation of the oppressed, where precedence must be given not just to women but to women who are poor and damaged in spirit. For theological schools that develop their curricula within this framework, courses in feminist theology and biblical studies work with class analysis at the same time that they address the specific issues of female oppression and disenfranchisement. Diverse cultural traditions that enrich the difficult lives of women are brought forward as clues that help us discover women's experiences in the biblical period and as data that contribute to our theological reflection.

Not all theological institutions in the region conceive of their work in these terms or analyze society in the way that liberation theologies do. Courses in feminist theology may turn out to be quite similar to those offered in the North Atlantic world. Even in these cases, however, the feminist perspective on life from outside the dominant countries can serve as an opening wedge that permits students to conceive of a new way to look at inherited theological traditions.

Although it was deemed prudent to use the name "Women's Theology" rather than "feminist theology," a union seminary in Bolivia required this course of all students as early as 1989.

The question of whether a course in feminist theology is included in the curriculum as an elective or as a required course, reveals how much importance the institution gives not only to women's theological concerns, but also to the whole area of rethinking theology from fresh viewpoints. To some extent, the decision whether or not to require all students to take a course in feminist theology also reveals the direction the institution, and the churches that receive its graduates, will take in the future regarding the full participation of women.

It is not surprising that in many institutions in Latin America, women who develop courses in feminist theology and biblical studies are also concerned to take their work directly to the churches. They recognize that any progress the churches will make toward a less patriarchal understanding of Christian faith and life will depend more on lay leaders than it will on seminary graduates. Consequently, this aspect of the academic curriculum is often translated into teaching materials for workshops and short courses designed to incorporate church members into a process of study and action in their local communities. Language and content are carefully chosen, as the possibility of a patriarchal backlash is always imminent.

Along with the extremely valuable contributions of feminist theology and biblical studies, an important limitation was felt, in that this approach, not unexpectedly, focused exclusively on women's experiences and perspectives as over against a male dominated system. Within the framework of human liberation, we needed to find the means for men to analyze and question their own experiences and perspectives as both protagonists and victims of systems that male dominance has created.

In 1994, a conference of women theology professors was convened at the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano (SBL) in Costa Rica. Assembled from all over Latin America, the group of 25 women discussed theoretical issues in feminist theology and biblical studies, as well as their efforts to incorporate these viewpoints in the curricula of their institutions. The concept of gender analysis, pregnant with significance for the future direction of our field, was introduced into the discussion by a local university professor.⁴¹

The incorporation of gender theory and feminist perspectives into an institution as a whole

In order to reach a point where feminist perspectives are not restricted to a few courses (taught by women and studied mainly by women) but actually permeate the curriculum, these perspectives need to be shared by the teaching staff as a whole. The development of gender theory⁴² has provided a conceptual framework that is proving useful in working toward such a goal.

By means of gender analysis, both men and women are enabled to discover and comprehend their unconscious presuppositions and prejudices, the hang-ups and blind spots that limit or disorient their approach to any object of study, including theology. It can be a liberating experience for men to realize why a marginalized person (a woman, for example) may be right to insist that an alternative way of seeing and experiencing the world (and therefore Christian faith as well) will reveal biased understandings and skewed judgments on the part of the dominant sector in a particular social group, such as male theologians or biblical scholars. By opening themselves to this fact, professors in theological institutions can deepen their understanding of human relations and Christian faith, to the benefit of their personal lives as well as their professional activity.

Gender theory was the topic for study at a 3-day faculty workshop of the UBL in Costa Rica, in February 2000. Dr Marcela Lagarde, an outstanding Mexican anthropologist who has pioneered and promoted the development of gender theory in Latin America, communicated a wealth of information and guided the group in processing it. On the third day men and women professors spent the morning working in sepa-

⁴¹ Several of the lectures appear in the SBL publication *Vida y pensamiento*, Vol. 14, #1 (1994). reproduced.

⁴² Basic to all human thinking and activity, the term "gender" refers to the fact that all human beings are socialized by their culture to behave in ways which that particular culture considers appropriate, "natural," for their sex. Different value judgments are assigned to qualities considered to be masculine or feminine. In most cultures, superiority is ascribed to masculine characteristics and persons. As a result of this gender construction, men and women see themselves and the world differently; consequently they approach their work differently. This is true as much for the theologian, pastor or biblical scholar as it is for any other person.

rate groups on personal issues related to their respective experiences of gender conditioning in our society. It was expected that in the afternoon each group would move on to explore gender issues in relation to each person's field of study and teaching. Since the women professors have dealt with gender issues for several years, they were able to draw up a number of concrete suggestions regarding courses and curriculum, and presented them in the plenary session. The men, however, brought only the news that they had found the discussion of personal gender issues so challenging that they had spent the whole day on that area. Disappointed at first, the women then remembered that it is only by processing personal experience with the help of gender analysis that people acquire the ability to use this type of analysis as a tool in their work. The importance that their male colleagues gave to this effort was considered an encouraging sign.

Hopefully, this kind of experience will enable both men and women professors to assume new perspectives toward our object of study, allowing us to discover new facts and come up with fresh insights and interpretations that will better serve our churches and the wider community. Following through on this conviction, a few institutions in Latin America have included in their curricula a required course in gender theory and analysis, a course that stresses personal reflection and group interaction as an integral part of the learning process in this area.

Three events at the turn of the millennium indicate a growing integration of gender theory and feminist theology.

August 1999, Bogotá, Colombia. At a meeting of Latin American women theologians, Dr Marcela Lagarde

contributed invaluable insights that were enthusiastically incorporated into the study of the theme of the meeting: Globalization and its Impact on Women. The participants saw important implications of gender theory for the theological and pastoral aspects of their subject.⁴³

January 2000, El Crucero, Nicaragua. A second conference of Latin American women theology professors (see section 2 above) gathered 35 women from 15 countries to examine the use of gender perspectives in their research and teaching in all of the theological disciplines.⁴⁴

July 2000, Cumbaya, Ecuador. The topic of gender and feminist theology was included in a symposium convened jointly by the Latin American region of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, and CETELA (Community of Ecumenical Theological Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, composed almost entirely of Protestant institutions). The fact that the presentation of this subject was made by a group composed of men as well as women illustrates the importance that some male colleagues give to the regenerative effect of a gender perspective in their life and work.⁴⁵

The incorporation of this emphasis into the curricula of theological institutions will probably take many different forms. Examples are not abundant as yet, but here is one experiment from this year's academic program at the UBL in Costa Rica. It will soon be followed by another effort at ISEAT in Bolivia. Both of these institutions draw students from several countries and many denominations.

⁴³ Dr. Lagarde's lecture is published in *La sociedad que las mujeres soñamos*, Elsa Tamez, ed. (San José: DEI, 2001) along with "Documento final" and other lectures presented at the meeting.

⁴⁴ See section 3 below for a sample of the methods and strategies discussed. A report of the conference appeared in *Ministerial Formation* #91 (Oct. 2000).

⁴⁵ See "6th Theological Symposium of ASETT(LA) and CETELA," *Ministerial Formation* #91 (Oct. 2000), and ASETT *Boletín* #3, julio de 2000. The "Documento final" of the women theologians (see note 1) is reproduced in this bulletin. The lecture on "Theo-Feminist Pedagogy: An emerging theological pedagogy with a liberating and transforming vocation", delivered at the CETELA-ASETT conference by Anaida Pascual Morán, is published in both Spanish and English in *Ministerial Formation* #94 (July 2001).

Taken by all 5th year students, the interdisciplinary seminar called "Gender: Reconstruction of Life," demands full time participation during 2 months. Nine academic credits are granted. As an overall objective the seminar seeks to enable students to analyze the concept of gender and its interaction with all spheres of life, and specifically with biblical research and interpretation, theological construction and pastoral praxis.

Suggestions for engendering the theological curriculum

In an area like gender and feminist theology, that affects people so intimately and determines their most significant relationships, it is important to develop not only rational processes for use in "objective" study and analysis but also other types of learning experiences that will allow students to examine their own attitudes and presuppositions, and internalize new viewpoints regarding themselves, others, God, the Bible, theology—the whole field.

The second conference of women theology professors provides a sample of what some of these methods and strategies might include.⁴⁶ For instance, the professors who work in the area of systematic theology recommended deconstructing theological topics by means of critical questions that bring to light issues such as the power relations, implicit in the formulation of a particular topic in theology, where social group(s) in society stand to

benefit from that formulation. Among other recommendations, the theology group urged the use of feminist anthropology and gender theory as tools for doing theology.

Professors of biblical studies also recommended that gender analysis be incorporated in all aspects of exegesis, in order to uncover the power plays that structure the biblical texts and the world in which they were written. Because of the androcentric character of the texts and the cultures in which they are embedded, special strategies must be developed to reconstruct and make visible the active presence of women as part of the people present in every biblical context.

For professors in the area of practical theology, teaching methods should link course work with real life by means of case studies and field research in which gender aspects are focused. Religious education professors, who agreed that the perspective of gender should permeate all of the courses offered in a theological curriculum, recommended that training in gender-oriented pedagogy be offered to professors of theology as well as to teachers of religion in the churches.

These and many more recommendations need to be brought into the debate within our institutions as we move toward a transformation of the theological curriculum. The issue is more than academic, however. As feminist scholars have insisted, this is not just an ideological fad. The issue of gender joins all of the theological disciplines at the heart of the Christian faith, a necessary component of justice, love and the formation of whole people after the image of Christ.

⁴⁶ The full set of recommendations can be found in my article, "Theological Teaching and Gender Perspective. II conference of Latin American women Theology Professors", *Ministerial Formation* #91 (Oct., 2000).



*Prof. Dr Irene Foulkes (left), Dr Martin Nelumbu (center) and
Dr John Hoffneyer (right)*

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM: A REGIONAL UPDATE – THE EUROPEAN SITUATION

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One of the most significant changes in theological education during the past few decades is the growing number of women within the student body, as well as amongst theological educators. In many western theological institutions, women are now more than fifty percent of the students, but the number of women amongst those teaching is much smaller. The general push for affirmative action, including law-enforcement, to secure gender equality, has certainly affected the situation within the churches as well as teaching institutions. But the status of women is far from being satisfactory in most places. The number of women teaching theology, especially as full professors is very limited in most places. The absence of women amongst teachers in theological institutions in Germany is a sad example. Qualified women have found it hard to get positions, and the ratio between the large number of female students and few or none female teachers is most striking.

People have often looked to the Nordic countries for models in the quest for gender equality. A significant progress has been made in this particular part of the world, since a number of important steps have been taken for the last two to three decades, regarding women's rights as well as women's status within church and society. To give some insights of what is going on in the Nordic Countries, I have chosen to focus on the status of women and feminist theology

within theological institutions in Iceland, Norway and Sweden. For obvious reasons, I will spend most time on the situation in Iceland.



Iceland

The first woman graduated from the theological department within the University of Iceland in the year 1945, and the second one in 1962. The numbers of women grew slowly and for long time women were a sheer minority among the students. In the Fall of 1993, there were more women than men for the first time. Now women have exceeded 70 % of the student body with a total number of 130 students. To compare, women are now 60 % of the total number of students studying in the University. Women are not nearly as many amongst those graduating, but why a significant number of women do not finish their education is a different question. A fair number of women entering the theological department are older, second-career women, either changing a profession or preparing themselves for a job outside their home. The diverse experience women are bringing with them, does of course affect their approach to their studies.

Theological education, including training of pastors, takes place in the theological department, of the University of Iceland. Up until the Fall of 1996, very few women had done some adjunct teaching in the department, mostly within the training program for deacons. In the Fall of 1996, I taught the first course given in the theological department in feminist theology. A course taught by the professor in New Testament on women in the New Testament in the Spring of 1985, where he introduced the now classic work by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, made an interesting exception. Until January 2000, I filled an adjunct position, giving elective courses in Feminist Christology and Feminist Ethics. I also taught required courses in Dogmatics, Ethics and Church History, where I included feminist readings. In the beginning of the year 2000, I became the first woman to serve as assistant professor, my field being theology, with emphasis on feminist theology. The position was originally a two-year position and has now been extended for a third year, until December 2003. It was the President of the University who had the initiative to create this position and he is financing it. Earlier, there were eight teaching positions within the theological department. As it was the only department left within the University with an all-male faculty, the President decided to intervene. It will be up to the department if this position will turn into a permanent position by the end of the three-year term. Due to the financial situation of the department, my future within the University, is by no means secure. Still the present Dean, as well as the former one, have expressed their hopes to find ways to turn my position into a permanent one.

By now I have introduced five courses in feminist theology. I have taught two of them three times altogether. These courses are on Feminist Christology, Feminist Ethics, Introduction to Feminist Theology, Feminist Reevaluation of the Doctrine of the Trinity; and Christian Faith and Suffering from a Feminist Perspective. Each course can be taken by students outside the theological department, as they are also enlisted within the program of gender-studies in the University. Even though I always have students from outside the department, they are a sheer minority. There has been a general interest in feminist theology and most of my courses have been well attended, some of them with more than 30 students, the majority being women.

I think it is safe to say that the creation of a position in feminist theology within the University has made both students and faculty more aware of the feminist perspective. Feminist theology had been known within the Lutheran church of Iceland since 1980, when it was introduced by the first woman ordained as a Lutheran pastor in Iceland (in 1974). The feminist perspective had been practiced within a group of feminist theologians and within the *women church*, created in 1993. Now a group of theological students are actively involved within the *women church*, where they find a forum for their interest in feminist practices. Some professors do introduce readings by feminist scholars in their courses, but very few feel prepared to actually teach the feminist perspective.

Norway

The majority of future pastors within the Lutheran Church of Norway are trained within the Menighedfakultetet in Oslo. There are no women among the faculty there, and it was not too long ago since this institution did not favor ordination of women. There has now been a change in their policy regarding the issue of ordination. In this context I would like to point out that churches in Norway are exempted from the law on affirmative action, if they so choose, which is unique among the Nordic countries.

Pastors are also educated within the theological department, the University of Oslo. Women are currently about 60% of the students. Out of the 16 professors there are 3 women. In the year 2000, a Chair in Feminist Theology was established in the theological department. This new Chair was initiated and paid by the Parliament. The same kind of offer was made to the other theological school in Oslo, Menighetsfakultet, but was not accepted. The creation of this Chair in Feminist Theology is in many ways similar to the new position in Feminist Theology in Iceland, as it is initiated and paid by external authorities.

A year-long program in gender and theology is being offered within the theological department. This program includes courses on feminist hermeneutics, gender in religious texts, gender and religious experience, feminist ethics, gender-perspective on god-language, and gender in church-practices. This program

can either be a part of a Masters degree in theology or as part of an inter-disciplinary Masters Program in women and gender studies, offered in co-operation with five departments within the University.

Sweden

In the theological department within the University of Uppsala, one of the two leading theological institutions in Sweden, the majority of students are presently women. Women are 60 % of the students on the master level (equivalent to M. Div.) but 42 % among the doctoral students. Most professors are men, and women are still a clear minority amongst the assistant professors.

For the past 10 years, a group of female graduate students have pushed for changes in the department and an incorporation of the feminist perspective. The outcome provides a strong model for how this could be done. The main focus has been on *mainstreaming* the gender perspective. According to a statement on affirmative action for the year 2000–2002, every course should include readings on the gender perspective, and writings both by women and men. To reinforce this rule, every year a committee on affirmative action goes through reading lists of each and every course to see if teachers do in fact act accord-

ingly. This regards both basic courses as well as elective ones. The rule of thumb is to include at least one book (or article) with the gender perspective and/or a reading by a woman on the reading list for every single course. This is done to make sure that it is not up to individual educators to choose if they will introduce the gender perspective or reading by women in their courses, or not. The push behind this is the fact that a significant amount of teaching is done by graduate students, most of them leaving after their degree, as well as a shortage of women among the permanent staff. Every year a course on gender theories is offered for students on all levels, as well as elective courses on feminist perspectives within different subjects. Since there is a shortage of professors who are qualified to supervise doctoral thesis on gender perspectives, it is obligatory for the University to pay a supervisor from outside the institution to work with students writing on gender issues. Finally, teachers in the theological department are offered courses on a yearly basis to prepare them to teach the gender perspective.

I hope this will give you some ideas about the situation in theological education in the Nordic countries. I have certainly not given you a complete picture but I hope that this will be of some use in our work together. I will be happy to share more information later on if needed.



Celebration of Dr Norma Cook-Everist's birthday

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THEOLOGY TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM: A REGIONAL UPDATE – VOICES FROM NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Women in theological education in this region of the globe are beyond the "token" stage; the substantial number of women's voices has contributed significantly to gender partnership. In the student body of the two seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), one has slightly more women than men and the other has $\frac{1}{3}$ women. The president of one of the seminaries is a woman. In the United States, of the eight seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the numbers range from 43% women to 59% women. In Jamaica at United Theological College (UTC) 35% of the student body are women. At some of these seminaries the number of women professors is still quite small, but at most, the percentage of women on the faculty ranges from $\frac{1}{4}$ to beyond $\frac{1}{3}$, and a number of these women have attained the rank of full professor.

Still the challenges remain. Many believe the "issues" are over. Consequently, judicatories are not adequately preparing congregations to receive women pastors. While women used to caucus, many women students, having grown up with the reality of women's ordination, believe the struggles are over, only to discover subtle if not blatant sexism still exists. Discrimination remains against single woman. Churches have yet to think of ways to use the gifts of women who take time out to be a parent. Churches are still slow to consider women for senior pastor positions. Some

women become depressed, lonely and leave the clergy roster for lack of support and creative ways to use their gifts throughout the life cycle. Inclusive language is used and expected at some seminaries; in others and in congregations and among church leadership, it is still resisted.

Issues continue and new ones arise. Due to lessening numbers of men entering seminary, another wave of backlash has appeared; some men fear women have usurped their place. Women, on the other hand, have no intention of replacing men, and long for equal numbers and healthy partnership. An important issue before the churches in North America is the ordination of gay and lesbian people living in committed relationships. The deep roots of classism, sexism and racism are intertwined. Theological education, includes and must fully recognize lay leadership, diaconal ministers and associates in ministry.

Although challenges remain and emerge, there is cause for celebration. Many men are deeply committed to full partnership of women and men in the church. The ELCA now has five women bishops. Curricula provide mainstream gender inclusive courses and resources. Men and women have found new ways of being colleagues. Theological education is seen as



a gift of and for the entire church, including its laity. There is interest in discovering and telling the history of women in ministry through the centuries. We have moved beyond simply the novelty of the phenomenon of women as clergy, and women as role models for women, to accounts of women in ecclesial leadership which can teach and shape the theological education of men as well as women.

In order to express the current situation not merely through statistics but through the voices of actual people, I conducted a survey of men and women, including professors, church leaders and seminary graduates. Following is a representational sample of the many responses received: (Female responses noted as F; male as M).

1. From your own personal experience, how has having women as students and professors changed seminary education?

[M] It has prompted a total rethinking of theological foundations contributed creative, new interpretations of scripture and tradition and promoted a more collegial collaborative leadership style. This has expanded my notion of what is valid experience for theological reflection.

[F] Women professors give a different perspective and richness of understanding.

[F] I don't know what Seminary Education was like before women were present, but I have appreciated the openness to women's interpretation of Scripture, different ways of preaching, and ways of pastoral care.

[M] It has broadened a cultural and gender perspective that was previously missing or under represented.

[F] The presence of women as faculty and students has brought a deeper understanding of the gifts and use of gifts for ministry and a much more in-depth understanding of the priesthood of all believers and ministry in daily life. Having women as students and faculty has helped to speed the further inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds of race and

ethnicity. Women have encouraged, invited, challenged, and perhaps even to a certain extent, forced the seminaries to utilize a greater variety of approaches in the teaching—learning cycles.

[M] Women in ministry have completed the office that had been left, in some ways, half-vacant for most of the church's existence. I say 'in some ways,' because it was partially filled with the traditional pastor's wife, deaconesses, sisters of the various orders, but it was never completely filled, because the church did not lift up and affirm these ministries as equal to that of men who were ordained. It has completed it by bringing the other half of the human race to the table! Women and men, by virtue of their gender bring different gifts to the ministry. Now all these gifts are present.

[F] I have role models as professors and peers. The diversity is wonderful—getting many different perspectives.

[F] New courses have been taught that weren't dreamed of 30 years ago. Inclusive language is now the norm; new concerns and discussions about how men and women interact, abuse issues, justice and poverty, interpretation of scripture.

[F] Including women was the forerunner of realizing the need to hear and teach theology in many voices from many groups, many nations and cultures. Women professors have helped change and shape the curriculum. Young women for whom being able to go to seminary is a given—not a struggle—need role models on the faculty.

[F] Simply seeing women professionals and having them as mentors/models makes the experience not one of loneliness and estrangement but of collaborative movement towards a goal not yet realized but in process: hope happens here.

[F] My father, an ordained ELCA pastor, once said that they never had any 'problems' with housing when he was in seminary, because there were no women. Having women professors and students has caused all kinds of 'problems' for seminaries. We have caused

problems with patriarchy, exclusive language, idolatrous images of God, leadership styles, conflict resolution, processes, gender roles, finances, and a whole host of other things. But the fact that little girls now see their potential to be Church leaders, makes all the trouble worthwhile!

[M] Women have helped 'hone my lenses.' Women bring into my vision a view and a perspective on issues that society and culture often have kept me from seeing.

[F] More attention is given to the inclusive nature of God, and to exploring diverse contributions to theological and biblical study, as a result of women professors. It's my sense that female colleagues have also broadened male professors' viewpoints.

[F] The mere presence of women is not enough; their presence and contributions as women need to be valued by the institution. When women are living and working and dreaming in seminary, they are no longer strangers or abstractions to the men. Women's different experiences mean that they bring different interpretations of the written Word of God, and a different embodiment of the Living Word.

[M] Having a theological seminary in the Caribbean is very important. Women previously could receive Christian education, but not deep theological training.

[M] As a man of color I see that women and people of color are often pitted against one another in contest for positions on seminary faculties.

[M] It is important when women or people of color enter a system which is already in place that they keep their identity.

[F] There has been a sea change: what we talk about is different, how we talk about it, how we interact with one another. Faculty meetings have changed as faculties became $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ women. The dialogue is more open, more inclusive.

[M] In the Caribbean the challenge to men is strong, since most of the students come from very 'traditional' backgrounds and find it difficult to see women in lead-

ership role. All of our participating denominations now ordain women, but some only quite recently.

2. In regard to empowering women for leadership, inclusive language, etc., what influence has the seminary had on the church and what influence has the church had on the seminary? (How is the seminary a leader, and vice versa?)

[M] The seminary has made a large impact among our graduates in using and promoting inclusive language. It has provided a strong witness to the validity and excellence of women as church leaders...

[M] I think the church has had to face up to the reality that there are no distinctions (Gal. 3:28). The seminaries have led in this.

[F] I believe that the seminary environment that values and encourages women both as students and professors deeply influences the church because all seminary students are exposed to women in public ministry. The church influences seminary by whom the church encourages to go to seminary. The church at the grassroots parish is not as kind or receiving of women as men, regardless of the seminary graduate's credentials or recommendations. The church sits in the midst of a culture that is ambivalent about women in leadership roles, especially in religious arenas. Here in central Texas, in the heart of Baptist country, the vast majority of the churches do not accept women clergy.

[M] Congregations are stretched in their ministry of inclusivity....

[F] The seminaries and the church are in reciprocal relationship.

[M] The educational institutions of the church are often leaders in change.

[F] Having women seminarians has challenged the church to wrestle with what it means to have women pastors, to discover new ways of doing ministry. Col-

legality has increased. Pastors are less afraid to show their humanity.

[F] It is significant that in 2001 three in the final seven in the vote for presiding Bishop of the ELCA were women—one a woman of color.

[F] The seminary has made unpopular moves to create a community where women and men have equal voice and opportunity, are valued for their unique gifts and are strengthened and encouraged in their sense of call. The seminary offers to the church bright, confident, faithful women who speak and lead with the authority of their sense of call and men who, for the most part, see women as full partners in the mission of the gospel. Women's presence serves as a challenge to patriarchal systems. With the challenge of systems comes freedom for those who are enslaved by it—both oppressors and the oppressed.

[M] The Seminary has influenced the way in which we think about God, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel. The Seminary is a gift to the Church.

[F] I see more variety and diversity in areas such as worship and bible study in congregations.

[F] I think women in seminary have provided a great deal of hope to lay women in congregations. The church has also challenged other churches that are not ordaining women. On many occasions when I performed a funeral or a wedding, many were thrilled, some found healing, and others were shocked at how much they liked having a female clergy, when they were so convinced it was not a good idea. Others, I am sure, kept their opinion to themselves,

[F] I think the ordination of women has enhanced lay status for men and women in the church.

[M] In the Caribbean academic voices of women are now recognizable, indigenous voices beyond missionary voices. (For years there were loving, formative voices of women missionaries in Guyana) Are we where we should be? No! But given the culture, that is not the question. Males are favored here. But more and more governments and families and churches are rec-

ognizing that education is crucial to uplift and advance the people, education for both females and males.

[M] For women and people of color there is no way of getting into the system without certain compromises. Together we need to ask how are we willing to make institutional change rather than merely tampering with the system?

[M] I fear what is happening is the "feminization" of the ELCA, its seminaries, its clergy and its theology.

[F] Seminary has produced women's voices with the authority to be heard—on theological and ministry issues. The church now has the resource of thoughtful, theologically trained women's voices that *expect* to be heard, not ignored. Having a woman as seminary president in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has been very important for women students in their discernment process.

3. Imagine... what would it be like for you if women were not in theological education today?

[M] That would be a deep loss, a loss of valued partners, a loss of wisdom and intelligence.

[F] Without women, I would not be Lutheran.

[F] It would be very stifling, no role models, a hopeless situation for women seminarians and difficult for lay women in leadership roles in the congregation.

[F] I believe that the language and images for God; the uncovering of women's roles in scripture and tradition; the gift of women's insights, intelligence, and imagination; the challenge of stereotypes of spiritual women; the discomfort of encountering women whose sexual preference is not typical; the struggle to recognize and accept the Other in women all changes the dynamics of seminary education for more good and grace to play out God's design for wholeness and holiness.

[F] I would like to think that I would be (figuratively, and perhaps literally) 'pounding on the doors' of the

seminary, 'pioneering' and encouraging, inviting, challenging, demanding change to come to allow me to fulfill my sense of call to mission and ministry.

[M] I recently attended a conference at a seminary of a Lutheran Church body that does not ordain women. There were only male students on campus. It was very uncomfortable to us who are used to the feminine voice being present. If that voice is not present, any education process would be compromised.

[F] There would be an even greater shortage of pastors and many, many more churches without regular Word and Sacrament ministry.

[F] I would be isolated and alienated. If I were still a lay woman with only men pastors and male language and thinking, I pray I would not have given up on the church, but life would be very difficult indeed.

[F] Boring. Safe. Inauthentic. Sad. Frustrating. Defeating. Incomplete. Honestly, I cannot imagine it.

[M] I simply can't imagine such a place. The thought of women not in theological education is for me *absurd*.

[F] My personal theological convictions would not count. There would be no 'wounded healer' pastoral caregivers for women's pastoral care issues—abuse, rape, infertility, breast cancer, menopause, etc.

[F] I think the views of women would be voiceless or misunderstood, if left to men to speak for them.

[M] It would put the church and seminary so out of step with society that we would be seen as lacking in credibility.

4. Name one or two ways feminist perspectives are taught/learned? How have feminist perspectives changed the curriculum?

[M] Biblical scholarship. Inclusive language. The course "The Community of Women and Men in the Church."

[F] There are better books being written for women that constantly do not emphasize a spirituality of subservience.

[F] One extremely valuable feminist perspective that has changed how pastors approach their ministry is the sense of community within the church. Pastors are led from hierarchical stances to collegiality with each other and parishioners. The church which used to be thought of as 'mother' and valued for its subordinate role is becoming accepted as 'mother' from the perspective of procreativity through servant power.

[M] If one is diminished, all are impoverished.

[F] Feminist perspectives have helped bring a fuller image of God to theological education, the congregation and the broader church. They have also aided theological education in re-shaping the interpretation of scripture in ways that are more inclusive—not only in terms of feminist theology, but also in ways that allow for more diversity in understanding.

[F] They have broadened and transformed education, congregations, and the church in a way we will never fully comprehend. Thank Heavens.

[F] There are more connections between faith and daily life. Baptismal theology has been lifted up. We have a broader and deeper understanding of God and God's work in the world.

[F] As the value of women was finally recognized, the awareness of other voices not yet heard around the world became greater.

[F] Feminist perspectives are both taught and modeled in the fields of biblical study, ecclesiology, church leadership and administration, and systematic theology.

[M] Listening to feminists' perspectives in conversations with peers.

[F] It has to challenge the church's models of power. A feminist model of power involves having the capacity to help others find power within themselves. For the first time, a theology course made sense to me,

when taught by a feminist professor. In other areas of research, it has been shown that female mentors are more likely to establish egalitarian relationships with their protégés, while male mentors are more likely to establish hierarchical relationships. I think the same applies for feminist faculty who mentor men and women students, who model a style of leadership that values mutuality, respect and collaboration, that emphasizes connection, and values differences.

[M] We need a variety of modes of leadership in the Caribbean, some directive, and some non-directive.

[M] In Jamaica, students from the Caribbean receive a theological education together in an ecumenical setting. Their sending churches have a say in who attends seminary, so there is a reciprocal process in integration of theological education and the broader church.

[F] Some people now ask, 'How are men learning to function in a feminist culture?' Well, it's not a feminist culture! It's still very male, but some men are learning to listen better, pay attention better. Women in leadership has influenced what kind of leadership we want.

[F] I never stop being crabby that the story of the woman who anointed Jesus is not in our lectionary. 'Wherever the Gospel is preached,' Scripture says. I didn't even hear that story until I was 40. Why does the church make it worse for the Scripture writers who were already paternalistic?

[M] Once a year a camp for all Lutheran young people in Guyana is held. Were we to raise even more seriously the question of vocation there, young woman would see new possibilities for their lives.

[M] Peer-pressured faculty and faculty-enforced conformity—without conviction (i.e., without being convinced)—has led many students to "play the game" while they were in seminary, but to drop inclusive language upon graduation because 'it is not an issue in the parish' or in the larger culture.

[F] Women's teaching has aided many men to become more dialogical in their discussion and attitudes.

[M] Certain courses raise feminist issues, such as biblical courses, courses on theology, especially liberation and Caribbean theology. Feminist perspectives have changed the way we use gender language (although not as consistently as one would like), and they have helped to shape a critical approach to structures of power in general.

5. How do we integrate gender perspectives in the curriculum? What are the barriers and what are the opportunities?

[M] Modeling. Selection of texts. Presentation of material. Choice of electives. Faculty appointments. Guest lectures.

[M] Listen—listen—listen.

[F] The barrier is fear and a mathematical view that if you are right, I must be wrong.

[F] Dialogue is needed between women and men professors to model valuing of another's research and experience. It may be helpful for women and men to meet separately for personal reflections which may be awkward to share in mixed gender company. Barriers may include beliefs that putting energy and time into gender studies is wasteful of seminary.

[M] Celebrate diversity in all its aspects.

[F] Women's perspectives and life experiences are still not seen as valuable or as valid as men's; men are not as willing to listen to women; women are still silenced.

[F] Gender integration in the church has much to do with trust in God. One whose calling and trust lies in God has nothing to fear.

[M] Perhaps the biggest barrier is the entrenchment of groups who feel threatened.

[F] There are so many barriers—tradition, fear, stubbornness. Old habits die hard. New ones take so much energy and reinforcement.

[F] I think it is imperative that gender perspectives are also taught by male faculty. We need continued specialized courses on feminist issues, on men and women in community, etc. In addition, these perspectives need to be included in other courses and in seminary-wide policies on inclusive language in chapel, in the classroom, and on papers.

[F] I'm not responsible that men aren't in the pews. Men have a role to play in the church. Men need to speak up more on these issues. There are some men who won't bale out on justice issues.

[F] It's a matter of loaves and fishes. We need to say that gifts and empowerment is unlimited, unlimited, unlimited.

[M] How do we challenge the ecclesial community and the ecclesiastical powers? We must move beyond merely adding more people at the table to changing the shape of the table.

[M] Systems won't change automatically; we have to be intentional.

[M] Women clergy need to keep in touch with lay women so they do not feel betrayed.

[M] I fear a further 'de-masculinizing' of ministry among Lutheran men. I hope 'engendering' theological education does not come to that.

[F] I am truly awestruck to see how many seminaries around the globe have courses in feminist theology and perspective that are *required* for all students. The problem here is that feminist or gender studies are often seen as peripheral. We often think professors have to teach *about* women's perspective rather than empower women students to bring their opinion to teach others.

6. What still needs to change? What dream do you have for the Church in North America and the Caribbean and globally?

[F] I would like to see more theology books written by women. I dream of a time when wealthy congregations

will not have a 'hiring' mentality of a blonde white man with a wife, two adorable children and a puppy.

[F] Women need mentoring from the church and its leaders in order to minister with the gifts that they have been given and can develop. Women and men in ministry can learn how to encourage each other without competition.

[M] More women as professors—more women from the international community.

[M] I hope that women in ministry will truly become part of the church and specific efforts are no longer be necessary. I know that it will probably take at least another generation for this to be realized.

[M] One thing that needs to change is the tendency for many women to defer to males and male viewpoints. There is also a need for men to accept women and particularly women clergy on an equal basis. Men also need to learn from feminine styles of ministry.

[F] I still hear congregations say, 'We're not ready for a women.' I long for the day when that is not said.

[F] I dream of churches and denominations in which we have learned that power (*exousia*) from God is an inexhaustible supply and we, therefore, can learn to share and not fight over power in the church.

[F] Still the basics: joy in inclusive language (I can't believe this is still an issue); getting beyond racial barriers as well as gender ones; more models of what such a community would look like; a non-workaholic ministry.

[F] I am excited to see what will emerge from the deep integration of women in leadership in the Church. I think God is up to something big here!

[F] I dream that congregations will evolve into centers of mission and mutual encouragement.

[F] I am very concerned about the exodus of many women from the clergy roster after serving in ordained ministry for a few years. I wonder why the church has this huge asset that it seems so willing to

lose without making some effort to retain. I dream of a church where women are able to speak freely, and with as much authority and credibility as men do, whether ordained, diaconal, or lay. I dream of a church where women do not have to fear what may happen if they actualize all of their God-given potential. I dream of a church that Christ would consider his own home.

[M] The Caribbean is comprised of the Islands and the three Guyanas, all of which have a common history and population. More and more women are receiving education for and obtaining good jobs. This is overcoming the attitude of women needing only to make good marriages.

[F] Even though we now have many theologically trained women in leadership roles in the church, we still need to encourage those experienced women to reach another level, so we can make a difference in the central places of power.

[M] The church always lives in the shadow of its structure. Operational ideologies are theology. We need to intentionally, continuously work on issues of racism, sexism and classism.

[M] In the English speaking Caribbean, one cannot underestimate the role of Cricket. A woman from Barbados who is also a lawyer is now a Cricket commentator, perhaps the only woman Cricket commentator in the world. Her voice through the radio is reshaping how people hear women's voices.

[F] There are very few women senior pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. I wish that feminist theology, the role of women in the history of the church, and perspectives of women in the church today were *required* learning at seminary for all students. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America when it began in 1988 fought so bitterly over representational principles. But the church hung on to them and that has enabled women's voices to be heard. I do hope that the next president of the LWF will be a woman. That is a forum that must present strong support for women.

[M] I hope that over the next years there will be enough women theological candidates to exert some further influence for change in the churches in the Caribbean. We still have a long way to go in being able to discuss frankly many of the issues that most concern women, such as abuse. The seminaries can provide a safe place in which such discussions can happen.

ENGENDERING THEOLOGY: WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

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At the LWF Global Consultation on Theological Education in Rome in 1999, Dr Wanda Deifelt in her presentation on feminist theology quoted the 1997 report of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions on the status of women in theological education. The report had this to say:

Women are disadvantaged: in the daily administration of theological institutions; in male models of ministerial formation; in the syllabus based upon a male biblical and theological canon; in having to deal with predominantly male faculty role models and a male "unwritten syllabus" shaping institutional life; and in institutions where a *token* female presence simply maintains the *status quo*.⁴⁷

As women theological educators (and some men) meeting together from across the globe in Montreux in 2001, each one of us can probably echo these sentiments first expressed five years ago. What a unique opportunity and responsibility this consultation has to continue the process of engendering theological education throughout the world. In ten years' time

we must be able to look back to this meeting as pivotal in the transformation of theological education. Each of us has a role to play, whatever our position, in ensuring that we move from being a token presence maintaining the status quo, to a presence that reshapes the identity and ethos of institutional life and of program development.

Let me begin our discussion on what engendering theology entails by situating myself and my commitments in the process of theological education. I believe that theological education takes place for women at both the formal (being taught in institutions) and at the informal level (where theology is experienced as lived reality). The danger of this consultation is that the discussion focuses on the formal level to the exclusion of other processes that poor and marginalized women employ in their lived reality of faith, a long way from the privilege of formal education. Currently, I am employed as a gender activist in an ecumenical human rights organization called the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) and part of my work is devoted to a project with a Cluster of three theological institutions around engendering their

⁴⁷ "Women in theological education", abstract of pre-congress paper, *WOCATI NEWS* 7, March 1997, p 16.

programs. For four years prior to that, I worked part time as an Anglican priest in a semi-rural, poor and marginalized community outside Pietermaritzburg in South Africa. The other half of my time was devoted to my doctoral research and teaching at the School of Theology at the University of Natal. My three-fold role of being an Anglican priest committed to the transformation of the church, a gender activist that believes the lives of poor and marginalized women needs to shape our theological reflection as women/feminist theologians, and a theological educator engaged in the transformation of the formal institution, expresses what seems to me as crucial elements of our discussion during this consultation. We cannot speak of engendering theology without a commitment to understanding its impact on the life and practice of the church. We cannot speak of engendering theology without recognizing that poor and marginalized women engage their understandings of God everyday of their lives as they struggle to survive. And of course we cannot speak of theology without understanding what is necessary to transform theological institutions into places where our theological reflection as women is taken seriously in both theory and practice.

Many of us, like myself, are already playing this multiplicity of roles, particularly if we come from countries where poverty is a real issue for most women. This contextual reality must always shape our discussion. Thus, I want to suggest that if we are to move away from being a token presence in our institutions to become transformative agents, we need to adopt a three-pronged strategy in tackling the enormous task of engendering theology. We need to address issues of:

- Organizational change
- Program development
- Collaborative work with poor and marginalized women

Organizational Change: gender equity as a value and as an organizational goal

Organizational change as a starting point perhaps feels a little overwhelming! After all, we argue, why start with structures which are always the most difficult to change? However, studies in the field of gender have shown that for effective transformation to occur, there needs to be a commitment to gender equality both as a *value* as well as an *organizational goal*. These two commitments should not be seen separately, as they are mutually supportive of one another.⁴⁸ We cannot hold dear the value of women's/feminist theology without recognizing that in order for this theology to become central to the transformation of the patriarchal status quo, we have to be committed to a process whereby our goal is a fundamental change in the way the structures of our institutions operate. Thus we must have a commitment to gender equality as a value reflected in our women's/feminist theology programs or courses, as well as a commitment to see our institutional structures more equitable and gender sensitive. This mutual commitment to the transformation of structures and programs is how I understand mainstreaming gender into theological education.

Many women fear "gender mainstreaming" as was pointed out in the Working Document for this consultation, *Concept of gender: a just analytical tool*. One of the fears of feminist scholars is that mainstreaming gender could lead to the integration and bureaucratization of the women's movement, which would in fact result in the invisibility of women rather than real transformation. However, while this is a danger, increasing integration and bureaucratization of the women's movement results where the emphasis of gender mainstreaming is on program content alone without a commitment to actively engaging a process of organizational change. For effective gender justice to occur, we need to ultimately work towards congruence between the content of our programs and the internal functioning of our institutions.

⁴⁸ "What does gender mainstreaming involve?", *UNDP Report*, 2000, p. 1.

Before suggesting ways in which we could work towards this congruence, let me share my experiences of a research project that I am currently engaged with and is pertinent to our discussions.

Case Study: The Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions

Within close geographic proximity, there are three theological institutions in the Pietermaritzburg area. Each institution is different in ethos and theological persuasion, but all are committed to a relevant and practical education for ministry in the church. St Joseph's Theological Institute is a Catholic residential institution with about 98% male enrolment training for the ordained ministry with over 200 students. There are female educators on who has been in the employ of the institution for a number of years. The Evangelical Seminary of South Africa (ESSA) is small, with about 50 students, evangelical in persuasion as the name suggests, with almost an equal number of male and female students. There are some residential facilities, but many students live non-residentially. This institution is faced for the first time with an intake of women students who are seriously seeking ordination within their evangelical churches that have yet to provide the necessary opportunities. ESSA has one female educator. The third institution is the School of Theology at the University of Natal, which, unlike the others, offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, the latter having grown larger than the former in recent years. Undergraduate students' number about sixty, while there are about one hundred and eighty post graduates, most of whom live non-residentially. Permanent female educators have only been employed for the past three years, while the first African woman theologian was employed this year. This is also the first female senior level appointment. The intake of women students has consistently increased at an undergraduate level due to a bursary scheme that targets women. Women are also increasingly entering the postgraduate program at an Honors and Masters level, with female doctoral students being very few.

These three institutions entered into a formal relationship a few years ago and became known as the

Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions (hereafter referred to as the Cluster). This formal relationship is expressed in a variety of ways. There are courses taught across the Cluster that enable students to experience a different theological environment, staff resources in some instances are shared, their library catalogues are linked electronically, and there are annual gatherings of staff and students for business, worship, and social events. A further important linkage is across disciplines, where staff meet, usually quarterly, in discipline groups across the Cluster. The Cluster therefore exists as a powerful force in theological education in South Africa, and indeed in the rest of Africa as churches are increasingly sending their students to Pietermaritzburg, particularly for postgraduate study.

The Gender Desk of PACSA, as an external resource agency to churches and the theological institutions, has over the past four years at various times been invited by each of the institutions to run workshops, teach classes, and provide resource material. A particular focus has been on the churches' response to sexual violence against women, which has been an area of specialty of the Desk. Increasingly, certain staff members have begun inviting the coordinator of the Gender Desk to include aspects of gender awareness training in her workshops and teaching sessions. This is not incidental. In 1996, the new constitution of South Africa included a gender equality clause ensuring the rights of all people, both men and women. From 1997, a number of National Gender structures were put in place by the Government of South Africa to monitor gender equity throughout the country. Even those sectors of the church that had been at the forefront of the dismantling of the unjust apartheid regime have suddenly found themselves lagging far behind in both values and organizational goals with regard to gender equity.

This year, at the initiative of PACSA, each of the three institutions were approached and asked whether they would be open to engage in a process of gender analysis of their current curriculum. There were sufficient staff resources within each institution to ensure that this process was given the go-ahead. Two staff and one student representative were appointed by each institution to constitute what has become known as the Cluster Gender Strategizing Group, which meets on a regular basis with myself as the researcher/facilitator of the process. The first

phase of the project was, firstly, to survey the academic staff of each institution as to where they were introducing gender issues into their programs, and secondly, to survey the students to assess where they thought gender issues were being introduced into their theological studies. Students were also asked whether they would be interested in a core curriculum course on gender. Response rates across institutions from students and staff were reasonably high, enabling an accurate analysis of each grouping to be made. I will reflect on the results of these surveys when I discuss program development later in this paper. What is of interest for a discussion on organizational change are the broader issues that have emerged within the institutions as a result of an intensive survey on gender.

- Perhaps the most significant effect of the project has been the fact that the gender and theology discourse has shifted to the public terrain. No longer is gender the domain of a few, marginal voices committed to women's/feminist theology. Everyone in each of the institutions has an opinion on the matter, actively or passively.
- Shifting the discourse into the public arena has inherently changed the way "gender" is understood. No longer can "gender issues" be confused with "women's issues," but now are generally assumed to involve both men and women. Gender as a social construct has been firmly placed on the agenda of the Cluster.
- The School of Theology, University of Natal, was at the forefront of contextual theological reflection during the apartheid years and has a reputation for being theologically and ideologically "progressive." Through this process, many senior educators have been forced to recognize that gender equity might be assumed as a value in the institution, but the necessary steps to change institutional structures have not been addressed.
- Within each institution, the process has acted as a catalyst for an internal "stocktaking" of

resources around gender issues. Female educators can now speak out their concerns within an environment that is not entirely alien, while the experiences of women students will increasingly become important. This has led to a process of assessment within each institution as to where they are with regard to gender and theology, and where they would like to be (or not to be). Such a process of internal evaluation provides the greatest potential for organizational change.

Building institutional capacity for engendering theology

A public process on gender and theology, such as that carried out within the Pietermaritzburg Theological Cluster, lays the foundation for building institutional capacity necessary for the engendering of theology. However, even without such a deliberate and structured process, there are ways in which we can each build this capacity within our institutions. Let me suggest a few:

- Most of our institutions are built on male dominated, hierarchical models. Each of us in our relationships with colleagues can begin to build a different vision of ways of working that are collective and accountable to others. Perhaps, team-teaching a course with a sympathetic male colleague where gender as a construct permeates the contents could result in an evaluation of other courses within the institution. Indeed, as women working in the same institution, our relationships too need to become more collaborative and accountable, so that as female colleagues we model a different vision of theological education.
- Building capacity requires the stocktaking of available resources for engendering theology within the institution. While an institution might not be ready for a process that involves everyone, there will always be some available resources from one or two other colleagues, from women students, or from external resource per-

sons. We need to build on these resources by setting up networks where women's experience is shared both in formal lectures and in smaller informal groups outside of the curriculum. In this way, women within one institution will be further empowered to address the more difficult and long-term issues of organizational change.

- Mission statements and policy documents (or lack thereof) provide important clues as to where the institution situates itself in the gender and theology debate. Where there are obvious gendered absences, it is our responsibility to begin speaking about these with colleagues. Out of these discussions, we can then perhaps begin to lobby and embark on advocacy work around particular issues such as inclusive language and sexual harassment. Drafting policy documents around particular issues for general discussion could eventually lead to a heightened awareness of the need for their inclusion.
- One of the practical ways of ensuring that the numbers of women students are increased is to raise funds to sponsor bursaries for women students. Increasing the numbers of women students is vital to the process of bringing women's experience into the classroom with a greater critical mass, which in turn helps to shift the "unwritten syllabus" of institutional, away from male dominated role models.

The importance of these latter two suggestions has been confirmed by the student respondents to the Cluster survey. When they were asked how they have been influenced on gender issues outside of the formal curriculum, students identified peer conversations and interaction with women students and staff as being a crucial dimension to their theological formation. At St Joseph's Institute, a policy on inclusive language that is implemented throughout seminary

life has clearly forced the primarily male student body to question their own assumptions and values. At ESSA, where regular chapel services are held, many of the male students are experiencing women preaching for the first time. This practice in itself has begun to reshape how many of these students consider women in church leadership.

Program Development: mainstreaming gender or not?

Earlier I suggested that one of the fears of mainstreaming gender into theological curriculum was that this would lead to the invisibility of women rather than to real transformation. As a response I have argued that, while this danger exists, it poses less of a threat if processes of organizational change are actively engaged in addition to attempts to mainstream gender in curriculum development. These are not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive processes. Of course this response does not address the question as to whether mainstreaming gender in our programs is the most transformative method to adopt or not. It is to this discussion that I now turn.

Recent studies on women and the university curriculum⁴⁹ argue that gender mainstreaming must guide future curriculum development. Researchers from various disciplines argue that gender mainstreaming is a method that ensures that women's experience is taken seriously and not marginalized within the academy. Furthermore, it is argued that in fields, which are predominantly male, gender equity as a *principle* must be invoked as a *strategy* to create a critical mass of women students and encourage women to participate.⁵⁰ Translating this argument into the field of theology, it suggests that women would be attracted, perhaps even be more confident, to study theology when the curriculum suggests new gendered understandings of the disciplines of biblical studies, church history, systematics, and practical theology. In part,

⁴⁹ Mary-Louise Kearney and Anne Holden Rønning (eds), *Women and the university curriculum: towards equality, democracy and peace*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd: London, 1996.

⁵⁰ Kerney and Rønning, *Women and the university curriculum*, p. 27.

women do not study theology because the theory and practice of the church and the training institutions suggest that they be excluded. This strong social signal can change. A theology program that is gender inclusive begins to send signals to women about transformation and their role in the process. As Dr Ulrike Wagner-Rau has suggested,

Without growing numbers of women working in theological education, feminist theological concepts will remain marginalized, a special area which fails to be integrated into the total spectrum of theological thought and teaching, and whose influence and further development remain limited by lack of material resources and contacts.⁵¹

From a development perspective, Maria Inacia d'Avila from Brazil insists on "the dangers resulting from separate or marginalized gender studies since the progress of women must be studied in relation to overall social and economic change..."⁵² She is thus suggesting that engendering a discipline requires contextual analysis. Within certain quarters in theology on the African continent, genuine attempts by both men and women are being made to make theology and theological education relevant and contextual. However, this is not possible without taking into account the fact that the majority of African women are impoverished, have the least human rights, and are bearing the brunt of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. While gendered contextual analysis is not that popular amongst male educators, it must become central to discussions such as the Africanization of theology. Furthermore, how does one talk about the "Africanization" of theology, of recovering culture that has been ravaged through decades of colonialism and apartheid, when that culture is strongly patriarchal and continues to discriminate against women. Transformative processes on our continent cannot afford to allow gender to be sidelined

into marginal courses that a few interested students (who are more than likely already converted) engage with alone. Gender issues must be understood by both men and women as their issues.

Men as well as women must recognize the limitations of their way of seeing things, which is shaped by the individual, social and symbolic determination of their gender, and thus the mutual dependence of each sex upon the other's way of seeing things. Only then can theology, through critical self-examination, end the continuation of the asymmetrical relation between the sexes through its specific ways of thinking, symbolizing and structuring church life. And only then can it serve a church whose mission commits it to justice and love.⁵³

Program development: gender mainstreaming or not? I would want to say a resounding yes, but would also want to qualify this response. I do so because it is important to stress that **gender mainstreaming is a process**. Our theological institutions have a long way to go in accepting organizational change, equalizing the numbers of male and female students, and appointing female educators to senior positions. The various theological institutions to which we are affiliated are all at different stages of their development with regard to incorporating gender into the curriculum. In fact, I would be surprised if any of our institutions are currently ready to mainstream gender within the structures of the organization and within their program to such an extent that courses which are explicitly gender based can be withdrawn from the program altogether. Therefore, it is imperative that we do not undermine the importance of including explicitly feminist/women's theology courses in our curriculum during this early phase of engendering theology.

As participants at this workshop, we come from different social contexts, different levels of gender awareness within our institutions, and perhaps even

⁵¹ Ulrike Wagner-Rau, "Feminist theology: rethinking theological education", *LWF Global Consultation on Theological Education Report*, August 1999, p. 87.

⁵² Kerney and Rønning, *Women and the university curriculum*, p. 26.

⁵³ Wagner-Rau, "Feminist theology: rethinking theological education", p. 90.

differing understandings of the meaning of engendering theology. It is thus important that we recognize our cognizety, without detracting from the important task of reaching broad common goals that engage the transformative potential of engendering theology. The Pietermaritzburg Cluster, described earlier, is an interesting case in point. Each of these three institutions are at different stages of their gender awareness. Different staff members within each institution are at varying levels of openness to engendering theology. The student bodies of the different institutions represent different constituencies that offer particular challenges to the engendering process. The research conducted within this Cluster draws attention to issues where there is common ground within their diversity, and how these issues might impact on the process of engendering theology. Let me highlight a few issues, which might assist us in our further discussions.

Engendering theology: emerging issues in program development

Before we can speak of engendering our theological programs, we need to be clear about how we understand "gender issues". Our South African context brings into sharp focus the differences that exist amongst women ourselves. Issues of race, class, and cultural backgrounds define and shape our perspectives. Elsewhere I have shown⁵⁴ how the South African women's theological project was born out of racial division, which still impacts on our work together almost twenty years later. The notion of a "common sisterhood" has of course been challenged long before in the North by women of color.⁵⁵

The surveys conducted amongst the staff of the Cluster indicated that there are not clear-cut lines

drawn between the sexes as to an understanding of gender as a social construct. Female educators themselves have yet to meet to share with one another how their particular backgrounds (including theological persuasions) shape their understandings of "gender". Furthermore, because as South African women our experience of lived reality can be so vastly different from one context to the next within our geographic borders, questions need to be asked as to who defines and prioritizes the agenda for "engendering theology". We might very well all agree that gender is a social construct, but there might not necessarily be consensus on how gender injustice manifests itself in the church and academy. This means that in our cross-racial/class/culture gatherings we can assume nothing. We need to listen, dialogue, and constantly ask who is in control of the process. It would seem to me that a gathering such as this consultation is no different. Let us assume nothing, be always ready to listen and dialogue, and be aware of who is controlling the process. Black women in our context are constantly having to challenge white women on questions of domination and control.

But our differences should not stand in the way of a solidarity that seeks to eradicate patriarchy. This would be to the detriment of the project on engendering theological education, particularly in the so-called "developing world" where new theologies are emerging that are an overt resistance to the forces of colonialism. I have already posed the question as to how we ensure that gender mainstreaming employs contextual analysis that both recovers culture and simultaneously critiques aspects of that culture that are inherently patriarchal. Within the School of Theology there has been an overt policy of "Africanization" without including an overt gender critique of African patriarchy. Rather, this gender critique is tackled in an ad hoc way through various

⁵⁴ See Beverley Gail Haddad, *African women's theologies of survival: intersecting faith, feminisms, and development*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Natal, 2000, especially Chapter 6.

⁵⁵ Haddad, *African women's theologies of survival*, pp. 145–152; Ellen Armour, *Deconstruction, feminist theology, and the problem of difference: subverting the gender divide*, Chicago University Press: Chicago, 1999; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, New York: Routledge, 2000; Angela Davis, *Women, race and class*, New York: Random House, 1981; Heidi Mirza (ed), *Black British feminism*, London: Routledge, 1997.

courses in the curriculum. The research project drew attention to this fact by highlighting that gender equality was claimed to be a value, yet structures were not in place in the institution to ensure that it is an organizational goal. Much of the onus is now left to female educators to back track and attempt to insert this gendered critique of culture into what is an already existing policy on program development. The result is that male educators who specifically deal with Africanization issues expect women colleagues to teach components that deal with gender. Potentially, students can separate off these components of the course, without definitively dealing with the implications for the Africanization debate as a whole.

But the research in the Cluster has also highlighted the danger of mainstreaming gender into a program prematurely. The Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa (ESSA) took a decision a few years ago to mainstream gender throughout their curriculum. Prior to making this decision, ESSA had introduced a Women's Studies course as an elective in response to issues that had arisen between male and female students. After two years, interest from the students and the predominantly male staff had waned and enrolment figures into the course were low. ESSA decided to stop offering the course and "mainstream" gender in their program instead. However, little attention was paid to organizational structures that could support this decision or find whether there was consensus amongst the staff about "mainstreaming gender." From the survey conducted in the institution, a high percentage of the program devotes one or two lectures within a course to "women's issues." The danger of this approach, however, is that gender as a social construct is not being dealt with as a defining feature of the way men and women relate to one another, or as it circumscribes the terrain of particular theological disciplines. Rather, "women's issues" are categorized and then dealt with. Potentially this approach conveys the impression to students that they can get on with the "real" business of the discipline once those sessions are over.

When ESSA students were asked if gender issues were being dealt with in their curriculum, 80% of the respondents acknowledged that they were. However, they could not in any marked way, identify in which courses this was the case. When asked whether they would be in favor of a core gender course being in-

troduced into their program, 86% of the respondents said, "yes." These students substantiated their answers with a solid analysis of the church and society and the need to reflect on these issues from a critical theological perspective. They understood that the climate of gender equity within the South African context required more than what their theological curriculum was offering them. Both the staff and student responses seemed to suggest that staff were left to decide how to mainstream gender into their courses without any clear common understandings of "gender issues" or what their implications were for their program development.

As mentioned earlier, the Cluster meets quarterly in discipline groups across the institutions. The research highlighted the potential of particular disciplines to engender their programs even when other disciplines in the institutions were resistant to such a process. While the Cluster arrangement provides a unique opportunity for the sharing of resources in this way, it does nonetheless indicate the potential of disciplines within one institution to embark on the process of engendering their programs as a group of educators. By focusing on one discipline within an institution where there are already gender resources, a process of mainstreaming program development can begin in earnest without the whole institution necessarily being involved.

To conclude this section, let me summarize by reiterating that mainstreaming gender is a *process*. In terms of program development, institutions might be at very different places. Thus it is important to begin where people are. It is my contention that we should mainstream gender throughout our program if our institutions are ready to engage seriously with this process. This is probably not true for most of us! It is thus also my contention that we should ensure that explicitly feminist/women's theology courses remain within the curriculum as long as there is a resistance to gender equity as an organizational goal. If this is so, we should nonetheless mainstream gender where we can on an organizational level and on the level of program development.

Having said this, it is also my belief that we should plan strategically to move our institutions towards introducing a core gender course that incorporates insights from the field of gender studies. This core

course needs to address questions of power, authority and control. It needs to deal explicitly with the issue of patriarchy within our different contexts and its effects expressed in social problems such as the high levels of violence against women, women's vulnerability to AIDS, and their economic and social disempowerment. By introducing such a course into our programs, we ensure that there can be no confusion over what is meant by "gender issues" which is crucial to laying a strong foundation for any further efforts at engendering theology.

I suggested at the beginning of this presentation that the enormous task of engendering theology required a three-pronged strategy: organizational change, program development, and the inclusion of the voices of poor and marginalized women. It is to this third and final prong of our strategy that I now turn.

Engendered theology is collaborative work with poor and marginalized women

Theology does not exist in and for itself, not even the engendered version! In the words of Dr Ulrike Wagner-Rau, it seeks to serve the church whose mission is justice and love. Our discussion thus far has focused on formal theological education but, as I have already suggested, theological education for women also operates at the informal level of their lived reality of struggle and survival. As a way of introducing my argument in this section, I want to briefly outline the legal and social position of women in South Africa.

Politically, South African women have been afforded more status than ever before. The 1996 South African Constitution includes a Bill of Rights, which entrenches gender equality into all forms of public and private life of the country's citizens. It also states that where there are conflicts between the Constitution and customary law, the Constitution

must rule.⁵⁶ The South African Parliament ranks favorably in relation to the rest of the world with regard to the number of female members, recently estimated at 24% of the membership.⁵⁷ Since 1994, legislation has been passed that further entrenches the rights of women. This includes the Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1997 which provides for abortion on demand, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 which provides for women married under customary law full majority and citizenship rights, the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 which makes provision for marital rape, and the Maintenance Act of 1998 which entrenches the rights to financial maintenance of a child by both biological parents.

Potentially then, there is now more opportunity for women to taste the fruits of liberation. However, in reality things have changed more for some women in the "new" South Africa than for others. While on paper, *all* women have more human rights than ever before, there is recognition, that on the ground, marginalized women who are in the majority are not experiencing the benefits of their legal rights. After three years of existence, the national gender structure set up to monitor gender equity, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), stated that

Gender equality remains a distant dream for the majority of South African women... [and thus]...constantly asks itself how it can be more strategic, more economic and more effective in undertaking the mammoth responsibilities with which it has been entrusted.⁵⁸

It is women already privileged through education and race who are able to claim the space that the new legislation provides and hence enjoy more of its fruit.

Poverty remains all-pervasive in spite of South Africa being one of the richest countries in Africa. And it is women who bear the brunt of this poverty. Statistics show that African women consistently earn the lowest

⁵⁶ Sally Baden, Shireen Hassim and Sheila Meitjies, *Country gender profile: South Africa*, Pretoria: SIDA, 1999.

⁵⁷ Baden *et al*, *Country gender profile*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Public speech by Joyce Seroke, Chairperson CGE, June 1999.

incomes, have the least wealth, and have far worse jobs than men, and women of other races.⁵⁹ A high percentage are not employed, live in the rural areas, head households with no fixed income, are illiterate, do not own land, and are vulnerable to diseases, especially AIDS. Life for many of these women is a daily struggle of literal survival. At times the odds seem insurmountable. But life for these women goes on, and as I have argued elsewhere, "God makes a way, where there is no way."⁶⁰

Our theology needs to serve the church with a mission of justice, of love and when the working theologies of survival of poor and marginalized women are forgotten in the academy, then we are not promoting this vision. My own commitments as an activist-scholar and woman-priest have embraced these working theologies. It has taken me on a journey of exploring the meaning of the "subjugated knowledges"⁶¹ of oppressed women and their relevance for our work in the academy.

Michel Foucault speaks of "subjugated knowledges" in two related ways. Knowledges can be subjugated when historical contents are "buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization."⁶² Alternatively, subjugated knowledges are a set of knowledges "that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task... naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy..."⁶³

Subjugated knowledges, understood in this second sense, are theoretically useful to our discussion. Subjugated theologies of poor and marginalized women are new knowledges that in the past have been considered inadequate to the task of theological reflection. It is these women and not we as feminist/women theologians that represent the greatest potential for "new interpretations of Christian symbols, texts, new analyses of social structures, critiques of the institutional structure of the church, and solidarity with others."⁶⁴ It is their disqualified knowledges that perform a necessary critical function for all theological reflection.

These disqualified knowledges can be termed "incipient theologies."⁶⁵ Incipient theologies emerge as communities, who are not formally trained in the doctrines of the church, reflect on their faith in a provisional way, "gathering an as yet untested wisdom about the meaning of their faith."⁶⁶ Incipient theologies offer "contrasting experiences" to dominant discourses and are potentially transformative for theological reflection in the academy and for practice in the church. Recovering these theologies requires an epistemological privileging of discourses of the poor and marginalized which of necessity results in an *epistemologica ruptura*, a radical break in epistemology from traditional theology.⁶⁷ For

⁵⁹ Karen Hurt and Debbie Budlender (eds), *Money matters: women and the government budget*. Cape Town: IDASA, 1998; Neva Siedman Makgetla, "Women and economy: slow pace of change", *Agenda: empowering women for gender equity* 24, 1995, 7-20.

⁶⁰ Beverley Haddad, "Constructing theologies of survival in the South African context: the necessity of a critical engagement between post-modern and liberation theory", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14 (2), 1998, 5-18; Haddad, *African women's theologies of survival, 2000*; Delores Williams, *Sisters in the wilderness: the challenge of womanist God-talk*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

⁶² Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, p. 81.

⁶³ Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, p. 82.

⁶⁴ Sharon Welch, *Communities of resistance and solidarity: a feminist theology of liberation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 44.

⁶⁵ See James Cochrane, *Circles of dignity: community wisdom and theological reflection*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

⁶⁶ Cochrane, *Circles of dignity: community wisdom and theological reflection*, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Per Frostin, *Liberation theology in Tanzania and South Africa: a first world interpretation*, Lund: Lund University Press, p. 4.

women's theology to be relevant to the lives of *all* women, the *epistemologica ruptura* of survival theologies of poor and marginalized women must become a major challenge to theological reflection. In order for us to take the subjugated working theologies of survival seriously, we need to re-locate as activist-scholars, practically and theoretically, to places where poor and marginalized women articulate their faith practices. These locations will be different for each of us in our different contexts.

Personally, I have chosen to actively seek to be constituted by *women* who are "other" than myself through collaborative work. Working *with*⁶⁸ poor and marginalized women is part of a life-long process that continues to define and re-shape who I am. Theoretically, I have found three notions useful in understanding this process of re-shaping and re-constituting my identity: to "unlearn one's privilege as loss," "collaboration is more than conversation," and "actively seeking to be partially constituted by work with different groups." I will discuss each in turn.

Gayatri Spivak has argued that one of the tasks of the intellectual who works with women who are "other" than herself is to "unlearn one's privilege as one's loss."⁶⁹ Unlearning one's privilege "means working back critically through one's history, prejudices, and learned, but now seemingly instinctual, responses."⁷⁰ If this "unlearning" does not take place, there is a closing down of creative possibilities, of other options, of other knowledges. Herein lies the

loss. For myself, it is as I have begun to work *collaboratively* with poor and marginalized communities, that I have begun to understand this loss more fully. It has been as I have opened new possibilities that I have experienced new knowledges and thus understood my privilege as loss.

In gaining new knowledges through collaborative work and seeking to represent these, it is ethically important that as activist-scholars we situate and locate ourselves. If we do not, we run the risk of commodifying the "other." However, simply "situating ourselves" is not enough. What is crucial is "what we do with who we are."⁷¹ Our collaborative efforts need to effect social transformation within ourselves and within the women's theological project as a whole. Effective social transformation requires that collaborative alliance between the activist-scholar and those she works with and represents, be more than just conversation between equal subjects. It should be understood as "communicative praxis." Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that in any attempt to include previously silenced voices, it is important to shift from a hermeneutical model of conversation to a practical model of collaboration.⁷² This critical collaboration or communicative praxis links knowledge with action.⁷³ So while critical inquiry is important, so is an overt practical commitment to liberating praxis.

Emanating from the School of Theology at the University of Natal, one of the institutions of the

⁶⁸ For a discussion on working "with" rather than "speaking to" poor and marginalized women, see Haddad, *African women's theologies of survival*, p 185-188, and Gerald West, *Reading the Bible differently: giving shape to the discourses of the dominated*, *Semeia* 73, pp. 21-41

⁶⁹ Gayatri Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" in *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), London: Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271-313.

⁷⁰ Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (eds), *The Spivak reader: selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 4.

⁷¹ Daphne Patai, "Is ethical research possible?" in *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history*, Sharon Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 137-153.

⁷² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Commitment and critical inquiry", *Harvard Theological Review*, 82, pp. 1-19.

⁷³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Commitment and critical inquiry", p. 5.

Cluster, is a growing body of work that has explicitly explored what it means to recognize and recover the theological resources of marginalized groups.⁷⁴

Linked to this School is a community based project, the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB), which attempts to bridge the activist-scholar divide through ensuring processes of mutual collaboration between disadvantaged communities and the academy.⁷⁵ Biblical scholar and Director of the ISB Gerald West emphasizes in his work the importance of a committed engagement between trained scholars and poor and marginalized communities.⁷⁶ West argues that this engagement is a mutual sharing of resources through liberating work together. It requires an active re-location whereby the scholar chooses to become partially constituted⁷⁷ by this collaborative work. This *work* differs from traditional notions of research. It is an active re-

location and engagement with groups different from us and a choosing, to become partially constituted by this relationship. This relationship is not forged through mere reflection together, but through an active action-reflection cycle, which involves all as strongly present subjects in actual works of social transformation. It is in these transformative collaborative acts that we too are changed in the process. But this involves a choice. Identity is not static, but is constantly being negotiated and re-created.⁷⁸ Hence, we have a choice in what constitutes us. We can choose to be partially constituted by the "life struggles" of those "other" than ourselves.⁷⁹ As we collaborate and build coalitions "from a recognition of the partial knowledges of our own constructed identities,"⁸⁰ we are offered "ways of becoming other than we are."⁸¹

Poor and marginalized African women, and no doubt throughout the world, have been practicing

⁷⁴ James Cochrane, "Theology and faith: tradition, criticism and popular religion," in *Theology and praxis*, John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds), Cape Town: David Philip, pp 26-39; James Cochrane, "Conversation or collaboration? Base communities and dialogue of faith, *Scriptura* 57, pp. 103-124; Cochrane, *Circles of dignity*, 1999; James Cochrane and Gerald West, "War, remembrance and reconstruction," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 84, pp. 25-40; Malika Sibeko and Beverley Haddad, "Reading the Bible 'with' poor and marginalised communities in South Africa," *Semeia*, 78, pp. 83-92; Martin Mandew, *Power and empowerment: religious imagination and the life of the local base ecclesial community*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Natal, 1993; Martin Mandew, *War, memory, and salvation: the Bulhoek massacre and the construction of a contextual soteriology*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, 1997; Graham Philpott, *Jesus is tricky and God is undemocratic: the Kin-dom of God in Amawoti*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993; Megan Walker, *Tradition, criticism, and popular religion: a hermeneutical investigation of Marian theology with special reference to the South African context*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Natal, 1992; Megan Walker, "Engaging popular religion: a hermeneutical investigation of Marian devotion in the township of Mpophomeni," *Semeia* 73, pp. 131-160; Gerald West, *The academy of the poor*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999; Gerald West, *Biblical hermeneutics of liberation: modes of reading the Bible in the South African context*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Gerald West, "Contextual Bible study in South Africa: a resource for regaining land, dignity, and identity" in *The Bible in Africa: transactions, trends, and trajectories*, Gerald West and Muse Dube (eds), Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 595-610.

⁷⁵ For further discussion of the history, structures, and methodology of the ISB, see Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993 and Gerald West, *The academy of the poor*, 1999.

⁷⁶ Gerald West, *The academy of the poor*, 1999.

⁷⁷ This term was first adopted by Sharon Welch, *A feminist ethic of risk*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990, p. 151.

⁷⁸ Kathleen Weiler, "Freire and feminist pedagogy", *Harvard Educational Review*, 61, pp. 449-474.

⁷⁹ West, *The academy of the poor*, p. 121.

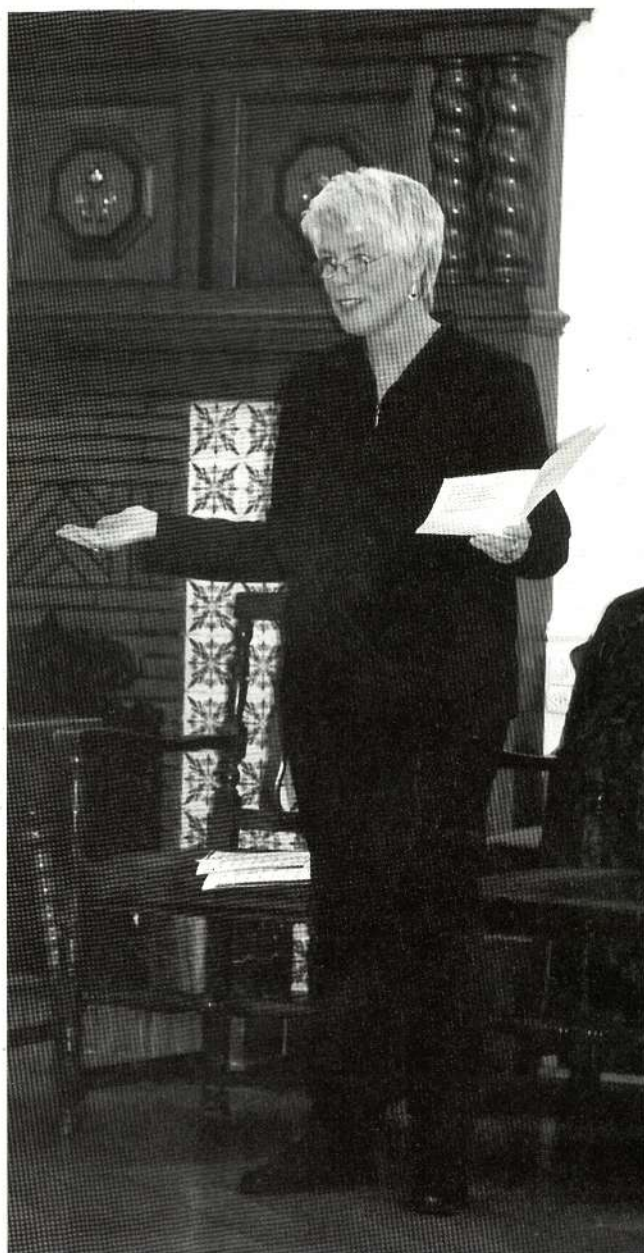
⁸⁰ Weiler, "Freire and feminist pedagogy", pp. 469-470.

⁸¹ West, *The academy of the poor*, p. 122.

forms of resistance and solidarity in their struggle to survive for decades away from public view. They have resources that are vital to the construction of power/knowledge in the academy. Their voice needs to be heard and their participation harnessed. For it is in their voice that questions are raised that would otherwise be forgotten within a dialogue amongst scholars and church authorities. They are questions that question academic definitions of theology and its relationship with activism, resistance, and solidarity. They are questions that counter the patriarchal hegemonic discourse of the church. They are questions that force women privileged through education to question the choices we make in shaping our identities. They are questions that arise out of a struggle for "survival, liberation and life" which I believe lies at the heart of the women theological project and ultimately the church's mission of justice and love.

Conclusion

Engendering theology: what does it entail? Well, I am sure by now I have convinced this gathering that it is indeed a complex process that requires our attention on a number of different levels. It requires long-term institutional change. It requires thoughtful and deliberate program development. And perhaps, most difficult of all, it requires profound personal change so that we can better see, hear, and include our sisters who will never grace the doors of the academy, and yet are key subjects in the engendering process. As we embark on this journey of exploration together this week, may we support one another, in our diversity, as we endeavor to engender theological education? And as we do this, may we actively not forget the billions of women in the world who day by day struggle for survival, liberation, and life, and so ensure that gender justice comes to all.



*Rev. Dr Elisabeth Gerle, Sweden,
at closing worship*

ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

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In my context (Norway), gender equality is generally accepted as a fundamental value and principle, both in church and society. Even so, it continues to be an important issue also for the future.

The mission of the Church is to participate in God's mission to the world, and thus be a sign and instrument of God's transforming power.

- This mission grounds on an eschatological vision that is fundamental to the Church's nature and mandate.
- This vision also gives final meaning to the importance of gender equality making it an issue for the whole church.

Biblical anthropology does not see equality as contradictory to diversity. Creation promotes multiform existence.

- Gender diversity expresses the relational nature of human being.
- Putting a hierarchy on differences based on value systems should be opposed.
- Both modernity and post-modernity favor anthropological models of individualizing and standardizing.

- Functional ecclesiologies should be replaced by communion ecclesiology.

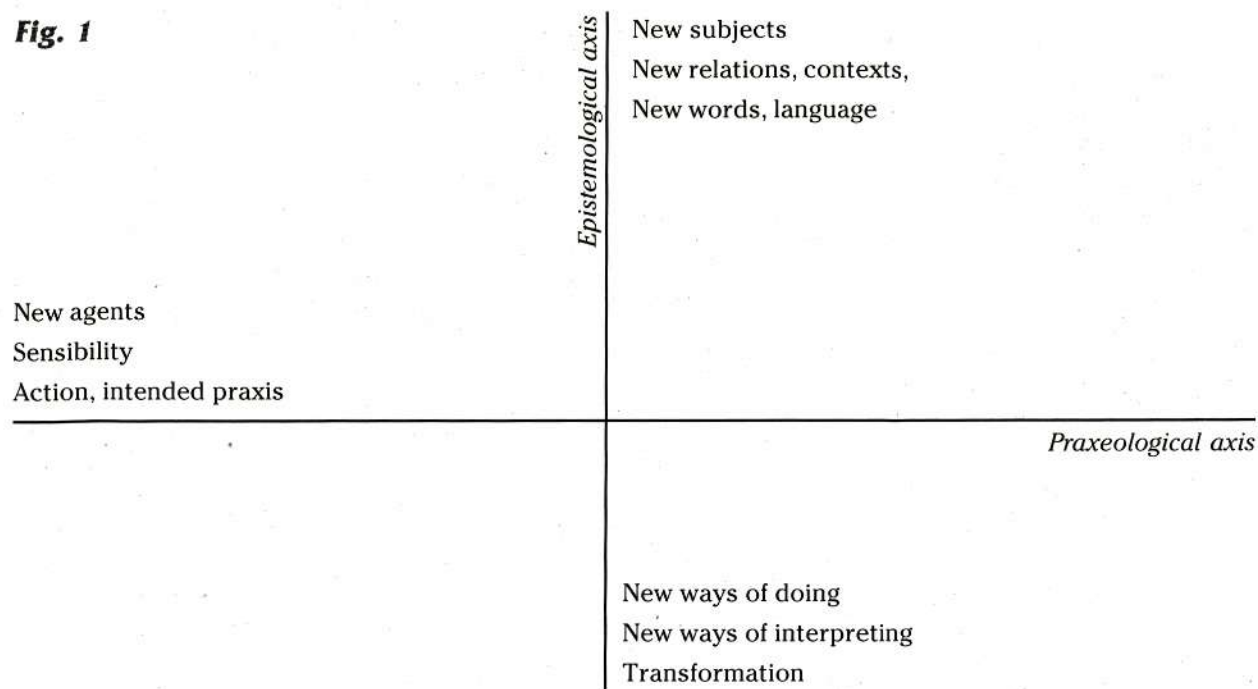
From an ecclesiological point of view, all believers are theological subjects. They are all called and empowered by God's Spirit to witness (*martyria*) and service (*diakonia*).

- All tendencies to make divisions within the church should be opposed, no matter their nature (hierarchy, culture, gender, social class, and level of instruction).
- Theological education should not be performed as "one-way-movement" of knowledge from the teacher to the student, but as a process that includes many different actors, all of them doing theology according to a multiform variety of experience and knowledge.

Different ecclesial contexts (not levels) of doing theology imply different objectives (logic) and different forms of production (methodology). Popular, pastoral and academy can be discerned as three different ecclesial contexts.

The task for engendering theological education for transformation should be seen within all these con-

Fig. 1



texts, with consequences both for the logic and the methodology of each of them.

The rationale of Popular theology (logic) is to equip all members of God's people. Its methodology must focus on participation, dignification, and empowerment.

- The biographical dimension in doing theology opens for diversity in experiences, capacity, and spirituality.
- Academic theology must find its role related to popular theology, as a kind of "organic intellectuals".

The rationale of Pastoral theology (logic) is to equip the leadership of the church. Its methodology must be interdisciplinary (relating theory and praxis), and must focus on communication.

- Pastoral theology has the task of contributing to responsible leadership in the church, responding both to the mandate given by the Lord, and to the needs of the people (cf. John 10—the shepherd is the first to defend, assist, know about needs, and find safe ways).

- Pastoral theology should strengthen the ability to interpret (hermeneutical competence) and ability to intervene (diaconal competence), together with wisdom to see what is needed most where and when.
- Pastoral theology should assist in developing the spiritual leadership in the church, with authority (eksousia) to heal, include and empower.
- Pastoral theology must relate to and affirm popular theology.
- Academic theology must upgrade the understanding of pastoral theology, seeing it as an important context for doing theology.

Academic theology has the main task being critical-constructive even when it affirms popular and pastoral theology as authentic forms of doing theology. Academic theology must maintain its own logic and methodology (disciplined—scientific).

Academic theology must be critical and also self-critical. It must be inclusive, it must be accountable for its use of resources, also in relation to the other

forms of doing theology, for its dependency on modernist and its worldview (universalistic, cause-effect-oriented, contrast-focused) and it must be challenged by transformation-related issues and perspectives.

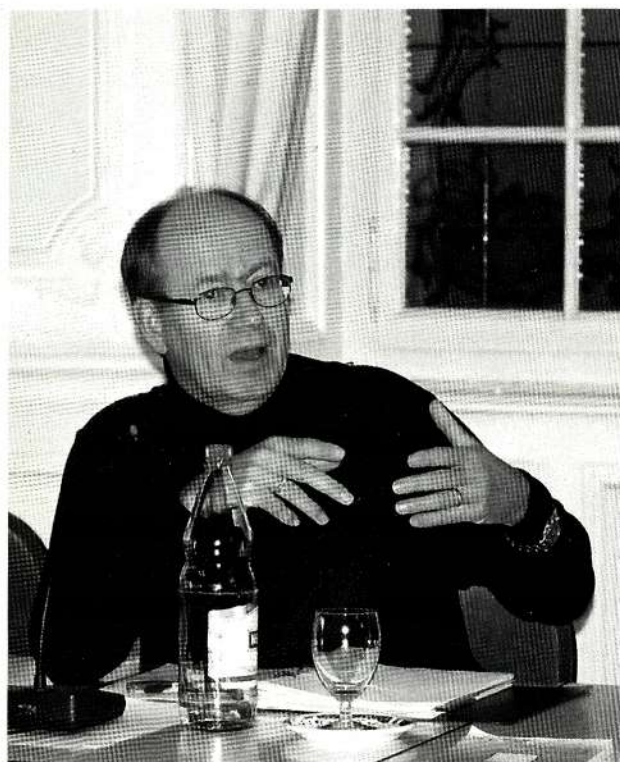
Theoretical framework for engendering theological education for transformation (see fig. 1).

Conclusion and suggestions

- Engendering theological education for transformation relates to the whole system of

doing theology: vision, fundamental task, logic and methodology.

- Suggestions:
 - Develop, broaden (or even invert) the list of loci theologiae.
 - Strengthen the praxeological axis in theological education.
 - Develop a theology of sensibility.



*Dr Kjell Nordstokke,
Norway*

“ENGENDERING” / TRANSFORMING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: TOWARD WHAT ENDS?

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Introduction

Having been directly involved in theological education for at least half of the past thirty years (as student, teacher or both), I feel I have lived through the different phases of the emergence of feminist theology and gender perspectives in theological education. That included the early phases where we were continually asking why women were not included. Exactly thirty years ago this fall, at the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, California), a group of us women students from different seminaries (there were no women faculty then) organized the first “women and theology” course in that consortium of seminaries. The only other Lutheran “co-conspirator” in that effort was a Hungarian woman who soon thereafter became the first staff person for the LWF women’s desk, Eva Zabolai-Csekme.

As one of the first ordained Lutheran women pastors in the U.S., I found myself continually having to raise “women’s issues” among my male colleagues. It was a relief later to join a seminary faculty, where there was already another woman raising these concerns, and then in recent years, to be part of another faculty where women not only were a significant portion of the faculty, but where gender perspectives are regularly taught by a number of male and female faculty, and have significantly affected the substance and processes of the curriculum and liturgical life.

Despite the sea of changes I have witnessed during this time—the incredible amount of scholarship that has occurred in this area, the increasing number of faculty and courses giving attention to feminist and gender perspectives, and the large number of theological graduates who have been affected by these changes—I continue to be perplexed at the subtle ways that many of those who still hold the power to define what is authoritative theological and ecumenical scholarship tend to sideline, if not trivialize, what we are focusing on here. One can almost hear their sigh, “Oh, here comes the feminist or gender police with their predictable lament,” which they politely sit through but then go back to business as usual. On the one hand, there is the serious, normative theological tradition, and in contrast, theological work informed by feminist or gender perspectives. The first is still presumed to be universal theology and the second, special interest theology.

Those of us who are suspected of embodying feminist or gender concerns are usually not found in the most strategic positions to shape authoritative theology. It is curious that although many women have advanced degrees in areas such as systematic theology, hardly ever are we teaching in such positions, even in those parts of the world such as Lutheran

seminaries in North America where women faculties are more prevalent. Instead, we tend to be in what are seen as more practical or applied theological faculty positions, as well as an increasing number in historical and biblical fields. Feminist theology is a pragmatic critical theory that seeks to uncover and transform dualist social constructs of gender that lead to patterns of domination,⁸² and in which the deconstructive task therefore is key. But the really authoritative theological work continues in ways that seem impervious to this.

For reasons such as these, I want to focus on a strategic matter that must be given attention to if our work here is to go further. A stronger, broader case needs to be made for why the engendering of theology and theological education is crucial—*toward what ends?* Those who are hesitant or resistant to what we are about here still need to be convinced that the purpose of this is not only for women, or men in relationship to women. Although that is central, I want to suggest that engendering theological education is also to serve other ends, namely, for the sake of being relevant to people's real life issues today, for the sake of the church, for the sake of God, and for the sake of the world. The following brief thoughts are intended to initiate further discussion and development by others.

For the sake of women and men

Obviously, the ethical impulse at the core of feminist and gender-related theological work is to move beyond the unjust patterns of domination over and exclusion of women in theology, church, and society. That by itself is an end that is necessary and sufficient, especially given all the centuries and ways in which women have only been considered as means to other ends. Taking women seriously as persons in their own right, and the importance of emancipatory discourses and practices that will enhance their flourishing, is crucial, especially in light of how oppres-

sive, brutal practices against women previously have been and continue to be justified on theological grounds. Given how deeply male identity is also implicated in these gender constructs, it is no wonder that men are increasingly taking this focus seriously as an appropriate ethical purpose served by theological work.

For the sake of speaking to people's real life issues today

It is not only the content or focus of feminist/gender theological pursuits but their assumptions and approaches that serve ends that are often overlooked in traditional theological disciplines. Rather than beginning with abstract universals, the emphasis is on particular experiences and concrete narratives. Differences require real attention rather than being passed over quickly for the sake of what is common. Inductive rather than deductive approaches prevail. Practicality is given heightened value over what is theoretical. Theory and practice are brought together. Teachers become students and students become teachers in more collaborative and less hierarchical learning styles.

Luther's central hermeneutical question, "what does this mean?" is repeatedly raised for the purpose of probing deeper: How does the faith speak to the real life questions and issues people experience and face today? This is the repeated inquiry that not only brings many students to study theology today, but also is the key question as to whether theological studies and theological institutions are seen as relevant and thus worthy of support. If the faith is to be meaningful, if evangelism is to be effective, theology must be contextualized. This is a far more complex process than applying external truths to changing circumstances. It calls for rethinking the basics of the faith in relation to the particular challenges and issues we face today, a fundamental shift in the paradigms and processes operating in theological education.

⁸² See, for example, Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster, 1995).

Much could be discussed here about this significant challenge, which is at the center of our attention in the LWF Department for Theology and Studies, but suffice to say here that it is especially feminist theology that has led this move toward contextualizing theology, to making it relevant to what is going on and affecting people's lives, not only in relation to gender, but all aspects of life. Gender perspectives do so by moving us into more systematic analyses, out of recognition that gender is entwined with factors such as race, class, ethnicity, imperialism, and so forth.

As feminist and similar theological approaches seek to serve this end, the traditional boundaries of theological disciplines inevitably will be crossed. Interdisciplinary approaches are becoming more the rule than the exception. To pursue the meaningful, contextual theological questions that really matter to people, rather than what matters to the keepers of disciplinary distinctions and hierarchies, drawing from biblical, historical, dogmatics, philosophy, cultural studies, social and natural sciences, and a variety of other sources is necessary.

Organizing a theological curriculum, much less educating teachers or professors, according to traditional theological disciplines is becoming more questionable. A lament is heard, for example, that few today are interested or trained in ecumenical theology (ecumenics), but the reality is that contemporary theology, and especially feminist theology, is thoroughly ecumenical in a far broader, redefined, more practical sense, with the potential to make more of a difference in what matters to people today around questions such as sharing the Eucharist. Rather than primarily for the purpose of preserving and passing on certain theological disciplines, an appropriate purpose or *telos* of theological education is to address people's real life concerns, which in turn will give new impetus to ecumenical pursuits. More integrative approaches significantly shift the focus, boundaries, priorities and processes of theological education.

For the sake of the church

Because many feminist and gender-focused theological approaches have been developed and refined in the academy, without presuming to be connected or

accountable to the church, it sometimes is difficult to recognize how the church is one of the ends they serve. Given that the church has often been the culprit in excluding women and perpetuating their oppression, it is not surprising that much of the critique of these theologies has been directed toward the church and its practices. Even in organizations such as the LWF with some years of giving attention to feminist and gender issues, it astounds me that the "favorite" hymn we still sing at many Cabinet meetings, is "The Church is One Foundation," without conscious attention to its strong gender distinctions implying that the church is Christ's "bride." Feminist theology is a *critical* theology in church and society, but so too should be other theologies, for the sake of continually reforming the church and keeping it faithful to the beliefs and values it professes. Critiquing implies a sense of relationship with, and thus continuing concern for what is critiqued.

Furthermore, there are significant ecclesial understandings and practices emerging from feminist and related theological work, and new learnings for what it means to be church today. Hierarchical assumptions or ways of relating are called into question. Church in the round, collaborative leadership and decision-making, and a variety of more egalitarian, mutually empowering ways of being the church are not only talked about and lived out, in ways that involve our bodies, emotions, and minds.

The LWF has been emphasizing, in the past decade, that it is a *communion* of churches. Although not explicitly feminist, there are feminist echoes in such an understanding. Communion points to close organic relationships, mutual participation, and impartation of life benefits. In communion we are bonded together so that when one suffers, all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). Luther's own explication of the *communio sanctorum* opens up provocative possibilities for a social witness grounded in *communio*. For him, *communio* refers not only to the gathering of the people of God (*ecclesia*) but also the dynamic of participation in Christ and in/with one another. We are not just networked through computers and economic transactions, but theologically we are organically interconnected, such that we are "changed into one another."

This communion becomes an embodied sign of the interdependence of all of life. *Communio* is an indica-

tive, not an imperative—a gift, not something we make happen. Thus it serves as the indicative foundation for a much different kind or moral agency than one based on imperatives or goals (such as actions to move toward the realization of the Kingdom of God). We are freed from being obsessed with “doing right”, or from trying to measure up, or acting out of guilt—all these can work against and destroy community. Yet through the gift of *communio* we are also implicated in a calling or task—to live out this reality beyond the church. *Communio* has significant implications for how we are formed morally, for how we deliberate on ethical issues amid all our differences, and for the expanse of our moral vision and scope of our action.⁸³

In relation to such, the Holy Spirit is given new emphasis.⁸⁴ The Holy Spirit affects how we experience God and participate in and with one another. We are set in a web of new relationships with one another, in ways that cut across and transform old boundaries. Under the power of the Spirit, we act differently in relation to one another. Polarities and hostilities that can contribute to violence are overcome in favor of a community of solidarity, responsibility and love. Finitude and vulnerability are accepted rather than what we seek to overcome. Love reaches out and draws others in, creating diverse webs of relatedness. In the power of the Spirit, love fulfills and transcends the intentions of the law, directed toward justice and mercy. People are freed in relationship to themselves and the ruling powers. This kind of power, if taken seriously in what it means to be a communion, can be threatening to dominating powers in our world today. It also challenges how power too often operates in the church, including in many LWF member churches.

This wider communion—or eschatological *communio*—is called, gathered, and maintained through God’s action as we know it through the Triune God, the communion within God’s self into which believers are received. It is a communion that is horizontal as well as vertical. Communion with God and one another, based on the Holy Spirit, is manifest and realized in a communion that can be experienced and seen.⁸⁵ It is sacramental, tangible, and interpersonal. A trinitarian view of God supports political theory that is oriented toward social interaction and participation, rather than submission to an absolute ruler.⁸⁶

For the sake of God

I refer only in passing to the observation that much of the resistance to changing exclusively male language and symbols for God may itself reveal idolatrous tendencies. Traditional speech about God is idolatrous

insofar as male-dominant language is honored as the only or the supremely fitting way of speaking about God, it absolutizes a single set of metaphors and obscures the height and depth and length and breadth or divine mystery. Thus it does manage to the very truth of God that theology is supposed to cherish and promote.⁸⁷

The point is not to get rid of all male language for God, but to incorporate a fuller, more balanced array of images, so that male language and images are not

⁸³ The above two paragraphs are from the LWF working paper, *Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion* (Geneva: LWF, 2001).

⁸⁴ The understandings in this paragraph are also set forth in the opening part of the LWF Assembly Study Book (2002).

⁸⁵ Joachim Track, “Gleanings...” in *The Church as Communion*, ed. Heinrich Holtze (Geneva: LWF, 1997), 54.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, The Cross road Publishing Company, 1997, p 223.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

by themselves seen as what is normative for referring to God.

For the sake of the world

Finally, I want to suggest that impulses within feminist theology, especially those that point to much different paradigms for power than those dominant in our world are needed—for the sake of the peace of the world.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, in a flash of unimaginable destruction, human power and possibilities were suddenly thrown into a massive state of crisis. What had seemed safe, secure, and invulnerable disappeared in a massive cloud of human debris. In many places throughout the world, such vulnerability and devastation have been re-occurring experiences that the rest of the world has too often overlooked. But on this particular morning, well-known symbols of human know-how and strength were pierced and destroyed by speeding airplanes that suddenly became weapons of mass destruction, as they crashed into fortresses of human might and security.

Once more there was a decisive shattering of the illusion that human beings can save, secure, or make life invulnerable, in other words, that human beings have divine power. Seeking to become like God, according to Lutheran theology, is itself the essence of sin. As feminists have long maintained, this is epitomized especially in gendered notion of male power.

The theological realization is that human attempts to root out evil, to establish total security, to hunt down and conquer the enemy in any clear-cut or final

way are continually confounded. Attempts to seek divine legitimation of human powers are frustrated. In most societies, such human power has been held by and associated with males more than females. When God then is imaged and addressed in exclusively male terms, this tends to provide divine legitimation for this pattern of male power in society. A theology of the cross, as well as feminist understandings of power, suggest much different understandings and dynamics of power and concepts of God, and challenges us to live this out more consistently in our ecclesial language and practices.

God's power is revealed in human history, not through the kind of triumphal might that we expect of "God," but through weakness, vulnerability and suffering. In the depths of human pathos, we experience God's abiding commitment to the world, God with us, giving us the courage to enter the darkness, with all the wounds, scars, and diseases in need of healing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we do so in communion with one another.

Many of these impulses are not unique to feminist theology. Some have been threads in theology for many centuries. But why have they not been heard or been more transformative of the whole of theology and the church? I suggest this is because social constructions of gender, in which patriarchal notions of power have prevailed, have gotten in the way. We have thus have been impeded from recognizing or realizing theology's liberating potential, for the sake of truly speaking to and transforming people's real life concerns, for the sake of God, for the sake of the church, and for the sake of the whole world.



*Dr Sarah Dille (left), Dr Andreas Nehring, Germany (center),
and Allie Ernst (right)*

INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM: ENGENDERING BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Women's Studies as an Instrument of Social Transformation

Gender, a seemingly neutral concept which refers to the social construction of the sexes, is now a critical topic not only in social and development discourse but also in theological discourse where gender analysis, training and gender mainstreaming are considered necessary inputs, processes and outputs for societal transformation. As gender is one of the more fashionable concepts, it has been used quite loosely in different circles, sometimes blunting its potentialities in the process. The most common example is how gender is used as a synonym for women. When one mentions programs from a gender perspective, the first association is with women's programs. It is easy to say that the substitution of women with gender is part of keeping up with trends. Yet there is a need to examine the schools of thought and political forces that use the concept of gender in order to differentiate between those instrumentalists designs and those who are genuinely motivated to develop this concept as a means to transform societies, communities, relationships, and individuals. Many feminists would argue that a critical component of the transformatory discourse is its treatment of gender within a power relations framework for gender identity is not shaped

by culture alone but also by the class, caste, and race of an individual and

these radically affect the experience of being male or female within a given culture or society. Gender therefore cannot be analyzed on its own without taking into consideration the linkages between caste, race, and class and how they are experienced through gender.

Women's studies, which is talked of as an area of research, teaching, and action concentrates on gender as a category of analysis in the same manner that caste, religion, class, caste, and status groups have so far been used by social scientists. It is now generally accepted that while "sex" refers to physiological distinctions, gender is a "cultural construct, a set of learned behavior patterns."⁸⁸ Women's studies emphasizes that a focus on gender as a category of analysis means that it now becomes an important indicator within studies where the focus may be on other variables. Thus, in order to provide a complete picture of an issue, there is a need to look not only at class and ethnic factors, but also at gender as a significant variable. In emphasizing the need for social scientists to be gender-sensitive, Women's studies is



⁸⁸ P. Caplan, *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality*, (London: Tavistock, 1987) 1.

staking a claim to restructure entire knowledge systems and social science methodologies.⁸⁹

In the wake of growing activity for introducing the gender perspective or women's studies in the curricula, the question regarding the objectives of women's studies has acquired importance. On the one hand, women who have been non-participants in the courses have to be made participants as a sort of compensation for ignoring women as actors or subjects in the transformation process. On the other hand care has to be taken that sins of omission are not compounded by sins of commission. Women are not to be represented nor mystified while introducing them in the courses. Women are neither to be deified nor denigrated. The purpose of women's studies is not just inclusion of material on women. The purpose is to stimulate desirable changes in women's status rather than reinforcing reactionary values. The purpose is to examine and redefine the conceptual frameworks of disciplines so as to evolve new formulations, which would accommodate women's experiences. Women's studies should not be one more discipline added which would perpetuate the elitist bias of our academic institutions. The organic knowledge on women has to be enriched through interaction of theory and field experience. Women's studies have to be a bridge between the academic and the grass root workers. It is in this setting that women's studies should be considered both as an instrument for women's development and transformation and as a necessary step to develop the knowledge base of various disciplines.

The objectives for incorporating Women's studies within the University system, as I have understood them, are therefore both academic and social.

Biblical Studies and Gender

It is within the broader objectives of Theological Education and Women's studies that I see the role of feminist/womanist biblical studies. Women have endorsed

the idea that feminist/womanist biblical study is a pursuit of a more comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of biblical reality and theology because traditional biblical knowledge does have a male bias. It is a critical instrument to transform values in church and society, which is biased against women, and provides needed information from the Bible for change. From this position, women biblical scholars have argued that gender is useful as an analytical category in the same way as class, race, or caste.

The Bible has been used for centuries to justify women's subordination but at the same time, it has played a significant role in the empowerment of women and has functioned as an important and significant source that has shaped and influenced the conditions of women. A recognition of this fact has led to an increased interest in the Bible and women's reading of the text as women. The confident and sophisticated study of the bible by women has challenged the very way in which biblical studies are done leading to the discovery of diverse hermeneutical principles and feminist approaches that have not only challenged traditional methods and interpretations of biblical texts but have enriched the community in its understanding of the biblical text.

A feminist/womanist approach to the Bible and the employment of feminist/womanist hermeneutics has resulted in the uncovering of the inferiority, subordination and abuse of women in Scripture and the inherent misogynistic nature of the texts, the female imagery of God, biblical women characters who counter patriarchal culture and other neglected women, and retold biblical stories of terror in memoriam.⁹⁰

I consider two perspectives to dominate the discourse on the role of feminist/womanist biblical study in India.

- The first sees feminist/womanist biblical study as a corrective to traditional biblical teaching, interpretation and biblical research, with an emphasis on improving theoretical frame-

⁸⁹ M. Millman and R. M. Kanter (eds.), *Another Voice: Feminist perspectives on Social Life and Social Science*, (New York: Garden City, 1975).

⁹⁰ Phyllis Trible, *Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies in Feminist Theology: A Reader*. Edited by Ann Loades, (London: SPCK, 1990) 23-28.

works and methodological tools for the generation of new interpretations and knowledge.

- The second sees feminist/womanist biblical study in terms of intervention—as an instrument for social transformation linking research and action.

For the realization of the above objectives, I see the need for the following:

Availability of Reading Material

Acceptance of integrating gender issues in the curriculum of biblical studies is undoubtedly a vital step in educational reconstruction. Equally important is the providing of teaching and reading material for courses in achieving the above mentioned objectives. A major handicap is the paucity or non-availability of reading material as well as the need to brief teaching staff on the approaches and latest developments in this new area of research and teaching.

Unfortunately, many of the courses offered in the discipline do not take into consideration the contributions of feminist scholarship. And, even where attention is given it is only cursory. This makes necessary the offering of separate courses from the perspective of women. In the present university structures, along with the restructuring of the courses, provision of reading material is essential for two or three reasons. There is the fact of rigidity in the educational system where introduction of new course has to traverse through various labyrinths of educational bureaucracy. The absence of reading material could in this milieu provide a very convenient excuse for delaying the introduction of new courses. Secondly, women's issues have to be discussed differently and not in the stereotyped rote style of examinations. For developing sensitiveness to women's problems and to understand their sources, provision of relevant material is a prerequisite for introducing gender issues in biblical studies. The problem with material is not merely one of paucity. In the last several years, substantial material has been generated. The main problem is that it lies scattered. It needs to be organized, collated and reformulated with a special perspective in order to provide an understanding of the devaluation of women and to evolve programs for positive actions necessary for redeeming the situation.

Biblical Study that results in Praxis

The onus of responsibility for a problem solving approach rests on women scholars. Researchers sitting in an ivory tower cannot meet this challenge unless they experience the reality of the mass of women—the poor and the illiterate. Implicit in this argument is the issue of the relevance of women's biblical study to action and the need for interaction between researchers and activists. Relevance here is used in terms of the use and applicability of research and also relevance of research in a given cultural context. The relevance debate within Biblical study is not new, however, within feminist/womanist biblical studies, the approach emphasizes an interventionist role for teaching and research in biblical study.

More Women Biblical Scholars

The need for an increase in feminist/womanist biblical scholars and teachers:

Teachers play a critical role in the process of transformation called education. The most effective teachers of feminism in any educational system are those who have internalized the feminist agenda and who work to inculcate its values and skills in their students. It is important to create a "critical mass" of feminist/womanist scholarship that would impact upon the method, nature and content of biblical study requiring in most cases a confrontation with cultural and institutional power. This would also mean the creation of experts in the field with knowledge of ancient languages, which may result in some sort of elitism within the discipline. But this can be counteracted with opportunities for dialog with women at the grassroots.

The quest for common creations sometimes overlooks that the one initiating the process is often a woman from an advantaged social, educational and even racial background. She brings a specific baggage with her despite her best attempts at incorporating the Other in her discourse. Her culture and her training determine her worldview, categories of analysis, dialog tools and modes of translation. Thus the new reality—or the one the researcher/teacher hopes to have created through the involved participation of her respondents/students may in fact reflect a privileged view, her understanding of another's world.

Inter-disciplinary Approach to the Study of the Bible

The very nature of the area lends itself to interdisciplinary methodology, analysis, and networking. Ideally, to work across disciplines, a researcher needs to be familiar with more than one subject. This is not always possible particularly as academic requirements stress specialization in a single area. Nonetheless, sociology and social anthropology stretch across disciplines, similar exercises increasingly characterize biblical studies as scholars look to new data sources and methodologies to enrich their area of work. It is possible of course that in the process researchers may be open to criticism from pursuits in various parent disciplines. However, this is a risk worth taking as research across disciplines often results in investigations into hitherto neglected areas and the emergence of new perspectives. Essential for interdisciplinary research is the use of a range of methodologies, many of which are relatively new. These are some of the challenges, which the woman biblical scholar has to recognize and take on. Teaching of courses on the Bible along with teachers in other disciplines or with the other gender and paying attention to concerns voiced by both male and female students livens discussions and opens up the text to new meanings.

The so-called objectivity is in fact the objectivity of male discourse. It is now time to make space for the feminist standpoint, to redefine objectivity. It finds attractive the belief that the observer and the observed, the teacher and the taught, the reader and the text collaborate in the act of interpretation and creation. A dialog and mutuality characterize these relationships, these must be within the parameters of location and context.

Biblical Language

Feminist views on language are complex and very diverse, reflecting not only political differences within feminism itself but also the great proliferation of 'discourses'—traditions, theoretical frameworks, aca-

demic disciplines—in which language is discussed in the modern age. Biblical language 'is not good enough' and one constant theme of the feminist critique is the need to change words and make them fitter for our use. We are acquainted with some of the ways in which feminists/womanists have challenged and to some extent altered conventional biblical language, and their quest for new metaphors and ways of writing which reflect female lives and bodies as conventional language cannot. All this implies a negative assessment of existing linguistic practices, a critical approach to the way language has been used in the Bible. But critique of Biblical language is more than complaint and reform. Language is a cultural and social institution and we need to work towards the questioning of linguistic structures that underpin Biblical thought,⁹¹ as opposed to just reflecting the Biblical world. This needs to be done not just with the original Hebrew or Greek text but also with the translated versions of the Bible, English and the vernacular.

In Conclusion...

I have identified a few factors that I see as necessary within the context of theological education and the teaching of Biblical Studies in India. I am sure there are more that can be added. Facing the above will require planning, training and changes in the administrative policy of the institutions. For a while, within Theological Education, biblical scholarship has been the purview of men. Women need to overcome their exclusion from the discipline and the academic institutions and participate fully in the production of Biblical scholarship, knowledge and method. Feminist Biblical scholarship should not be limited to women's interests and questions but understand itself as a different way and alternative perspective for doing bible study. A gender sensitive reading of the Biblical text would insist that an androcentric interpretation cannot claim to be a Christian interpretation if it is not inclusive of the experiences of women and men, the poor, and the oppressed.

⁹¹ Miller and Swift, *Words and Women* (New York, 1977) 34ff.

INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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The phrase “integrating gender perspectives in the curriculum” signals both a description of current developments in theology and a challenge to work for future transformations. My charge is to spur our thinking together on this topic from the perspective of the particular discipline I teach—so called systematic theology. The most significant contribution to integrating gender perspectives in the curriculum in systematic theology has come from those theologies which foreground women’s experience and which devote themselves to promoting women’s flourishing. In order to have a handy label that covers these various theologies of women’s experience and women’s flourishing, I will follow the lead of the advance material we received for this gathering and use the term “feminist theology.” However, at least in my United States context the term “feminist theology” often covers a narrower range, referring basically to theology done from the perspective of white women’s experience. Feminist theology in this sense is but one constituent—along most notably with womanist and mujerista theologies—of feminist theology in the broader sense, covering the various theologies of women’s experience and women’s flourishing.

Let me first look at several major features of feminist theologies, briefly describing each feature, and drawing one or more conclusions for an educational practice that seeks to integrate gender in the theo-

logical curriculum. I must admit that I find this task daunting. I am a man who regularly teaches works of feminist theologians at my school. I am not myself a feminist theologian. For that matter, the works of feminist theologians comprise only a minority share of my theological research. In short, I am far from an expert on these matters.

As a male theologian who is grateful for feminist theology, I want to mention also two other areas that I think are crucial for the integration of gender perspectives in the curriculum. One is the area occupied by theologies which foreground the experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgendered persons, and which devote themselves to their flourishing. I will not have much to say about this area, but I think that it is important to note that gender is not simply a matter of male and female. One of the key reasons why GLBT persons often provoke anxiety is that they make gender definitions more complex. They are often perceived as “gender-benders.”

The other area, about which I will have more to say, is that occupied by theologies which self-consciously foreground men’s experience while simultaneously insisting that it is not superior to women’s experience, and which devote themselves to men’s flourishing while simultaneously insisting that it is not more important than women’s flourishing. I am not sure what to call such theologies. The

development of such theologies is still at an early stage in the United States. In fact the stage is so early that no clear name has so far emerged. Since the usual English language correlate of "feminine" is "masculine," one might speak of a "masculinist" theology. But in fact "masculinist" is already in use as a pejorative term to describe theologies that uncritically assume a male-dominant approach. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to "andrist" theology, inventing an English word from the Greek word for man, ἀνὴρ.

I will spend most of my time, then, considering how feminist theological education. A concluding section will consider the importance of "andrist" theology as a complement to feminist theology.

Feminist theology and doctrinal content

One of the most publicized effects of feminist theology on the curricula of systematic theology is the reworking of specific doctrines. Most broadly noticed in the church in general are changes in the doctrine of God having to do with our language and imagery for God. This comes to expression already in the title of one of the most influential classics of U.S. feminist theology, Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*.⁹² Another area of long and influential contribution is the doctrine of sin. Valerie Saiving's classic *The Human Situation: A Feminine View*⁹³ which challenged the male-centeredness of traditional Western theological discourse about sin, appeared already in 1960—a good decade before even Daly's *Beyond God the Fa-*

ther. Since then, many others have taken up and refined Saiving's original impulse. Womanist theologians have pushed theology of the atonement in new directions: Delores Williams' *Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption*,⁹⁴ JoAnne Marie Terrell's *Power in the Blood*,⁹⁵ Jacquelyn Grant's *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*,⁹⁶ Kelly Brown Douglas' *The Black Christ*.⁹⁷ One could continue this list for each area of doctrine.

One approach to fostering that spread is to include feminist works in more and more courses throughout the curriculum of systematic theology. A complementary approach is to devote entire courses to studying feminist theological works. The prior approach is gaining ground in the seminaries of my church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The latter approach has yet to happen at my school. I suspect we are not alone among ELCA seminaries in that regard. Indeed I fear that we represent the majority.

Including feminist theological perspectives in each course in systematic theology is in one sense a more effective way of integrating gender in the theological curriculum. Bringing feminist authors into each course, rather than ghettoizing them in "the feminism course," is a more integrative approach. At the same time, if a faculty does not devote entire courses to feminist theology, it is almost impossible to give the illusion that feminist theology is much less diverse than it actually is. Since that diversity not only is a fact, but is also at the heart of how many feminist authors conceive the theological enterprise, the failure to convey that diversity gives a false picture of feminist theology at a basic level.

⁹² *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

⁹³ *Journal of Religion* 40 (1960): 100–12.

⁹⁴ In Paula M. Cooney et al., eds., *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991).

⁹⁵ *Power in the Blood: The Cross in the African American Experience*, The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner/Sojourner Truth Series in Black Religion, vol. 15 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).

⁹⁶ *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

⁹⁷ Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994.

Theological sources from a feminist perspective

Feminist theology in the broader sense is also changing the notion of what counts as a source for theology. At the heart of feminist theology is women's experience. To explore this experience, feminist theologians have turned to sources that have not traditionally received much respect from male systematic theologians. For example, feminist theologians have attended to women's narratives, both written and oral, both explicitly about God and only implicitly so. Katie Geneva Cannon's extensive explorations of the fiction of Zora Neale Hurston are but one example in the U. S. context.⁹⁸

In this area, integrating gender in the theological curriculum means using sources not so familiar in the systematics classroom. It means reading narratives, fictional and non-fictional. It means reading poetry borne of women's experience. It also means learning from unwritten narratives. One of the salient features that has emerged in feminist theological education has been the importance of participants telling their own stories.

Feminist theology and complex analytical models

The feminist theological concentration on experience has led to complex appreciation for the roles played by experience in the practice of theology. As theologians have reflected upon the diversity of women's experience, a diversity of feminist theologies have resulted. For example, in the United States, womanist theology has grown among African American women theologians, and *mujerista* theology among Latin American theologians.

The concentration on experience in feminist theology in the broad sense has also led to more nuanced understandings of the relation between experience and theological criteria. Is it possible to speak of women's experience itself as a decisive criterion

for theological judgments? If there is no such thing as "raw," uninterpreted experience, what role do theological assumptions play in the basic shaping of experiences that will in turn inform the making of explicit theological judgments?

Reflection upon diverse women's experience has challenged theologians to develop theoretical models adequate to the complexity of that experience. Womanist theology in particular has argued for the necessity of multi-focal analysis. Womanist theology foregrounds not merely gender, but gender, race, and class, and indeed in some versions, sexual orientation. Models of thinking that ultimately proceed from a single governing principle, or even models structured by bipolarity, can not do justice to the interplay of gender, race, and class that permeates the experience privileged by womanist theology.

I have mentioned several times white feminist theology, womanist theology, and *mujerista* theology as distinct feminist theologies in the broader sense in the U.S. Of course there are many other feminist theologies, not only around the world, but also in the U.S. itself. Feminist theology in the broad sense has, at its better moments, celebrated and cultivated its international diversity. This international diversity mitigates against reductionistic models in feminist theology.

Reflection upon the nature of the self has also pushed feminist theologies to develop complex analytical models. All feminist theologians oppose at least the crasser forms of treating gender differences as facts of nature. There is a social constructivist edge to all feminist theologies. But many feminist theologians become impatient with a desultory post-modernism which so emphasizes the play of social forces constructing the self that there seems to be no room left for a sense of self to respect at all, no room left for a sense of one's own voice or agency. A theoretical model that is able both to describe the self as socially constructed and to frame a space for the empowering the self as agent, is necessarily complex.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ See e.g. Black Womanist Ethics (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988).

⁹⁹ See Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace, Guides to Theological Inquiry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

Developing, teaching, and learning complex theoretical models is never easy. Because feminist theologies tend to be strong in making the connection between the complexity of women's experience and the complexity of feminist theoretical models, students may have an easier time making sense of the models. At least they may have more motivation for putting in the effort to understand the theory. Particularly for the less theoretically inclined students, it will be crucial not only to show how the theory derives from experience, but also to return repeatedly to the level of experience in order to keep the theory grounded there.

Feminist theology and the question of theology's systematic nature

With so much emphasis upon diverse contexts, diverse experiences, and socially constructed identities, one can ask whether it is possible for a theology to integrate basic feminist concerns and insights and remain "systematic." The answer to this question depends upon whether poly-contextual thinking that takes seriously its own contextual specificity still merits the designation "systematic." However the answers might come out, the question itself makes it impossible simply to designate part of the theological curriculum as "systematic theology" as if that term carried a clear and uncontested meaning.

If greater integration of gender in the theological curriculum would weaken the hold of the label "systematic theology," by and large students would be relieved. In my experience most students do not come to seminary with a clear grasp of what the term "systematic theology" means or what it is supposed to cover. Sometimes I feel as if we try to teach incoming students the distinctions between the various theological areas or disciplines, while in our own faculty deliberations we

regularly draw attention to the artificiality and misleading nature of those very distinctions. In short, integrating gender in the theological curriculum may push us to reconceive the very areas into which many of us traditionally divide the curriculum. Indeed some of us may have already been pushed to such reconception.

The practice of theology from a feminist perspective

Feminist theologies have developed new ways of practicing theology. Feminist theologians in general have shown a greater interest in close collaborative work than their male counterparts. In the U.S. this seems especially to have been true in feminist treatments of theological education. Two of the major works in the field are group works: The Cornwall Collective's *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy* and The Mud Flower Collective's *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education*.¹⁰⁰

This commitment to collaboration carries over into feminist theological pedagogy. While certainly not dissolving appropriate distinctions between teacher and student, feminist theological pedagogy has consistently criticized debilitating classroom hierarchies. A second feminist pedagogical contribution has been an appreciation for diverse ways of knowing and learning: In the U.S. one thinks particularly of the work done by Mary Belenky and her collaborators in *Women's Ways of Knowing*.¹⁰¹ A third, feminist theology has emphasized that knowledge and learning are embedded in practice. As theory, theology grows out of practice and has the purpose of illuminating, strengthening, and transforming practice. Nor is feminist theology interested in maintaining value neutrality about the practices its theories serve. As Elizabeth Johnson says, feminist theologies have a fundamental commitment to "diverse women are flourishing."¹⁰² A fourth, feminist theological pedagogy attaches a high value to specific, individual women

¹⁰⁰ New York: Pilgrim, 1980; New York: Pilgrim, 1985.

¹⁰¹ M. F. Belenky, B. McV. Clinchy, N. R. Goldberger, and J. M. Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

¹⁰² Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 27.

"finding their voice" in the theological process. Feminist theology sees this project of finding one's voice as occurring not in neutral space, but against the forces that have under-appreciated, ignored, belittled, or silenced that voice. Therefore, to help women theological learners find their voice is not just to give them space to speak, but to "hear them into speech," in Nelle Morton's famous phrase.

Each of these pedagogical commitments can serve as a criterion for making curricular choices. For instance, a faculty can consider the extent to which its curricular design assumes a "dispenser" model of knowledge, with the teacher as dispenser and the students as recipients. Or one can ask whether the curriculum could only concentrate on familiarizing students with respected voices of this or that theological tradition, but neglects encouraging and challenging students to try out their own voice.

"Andrist" theology as a complement to feminist theology

Last January I accompanied a group of seminarians from my school to El Salvador for a week and a half. One day we met with a number of leaders of the Gender Program of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod. The director of the program, Pastor Abelina Gomez, explained that while the program used to be known as the *Pastoral de la Mujer*, the women working in the program realized that changing the lives of women in Salvadoran society required changing the attitudes and practices of men as well. So the leaders of the program gave it a new name, the *Programa de Genero*.

One of the ways in which men have to change in order for feminist theologies to realize their vision of "diverse women's flourishing" is that male theologians must develop self-consciously "andrist" theologies. By that I mean theologies that take seriously their situatedness in men's experience. We already have far too many theologies that automatically assume a standpoint in men's experience, then universalize that standpoint as if it were everyone's. As long as we men

do not develop "andrist" theologies—or *varonista* or whatever the names might be—we will be too tempted to think that what we men do is "basic," non-hyphenated, non-adjectival theology, as opposed to subsidiary specializations such as feminist or womanist or *mujerista* theology. That is, without "andrist" theologies, feminist theologies will never fully emerge from second-class citizenship.

In the current situation there is feminist theology, womanist theology, *mujerista* theology, Asian women's theology, black Theology, liberation theology, Native America theology, minjung theology, dalit theology, and many others—and then "just plain theology." Besides the general problem of falsely privileging some theologies over others, this situation creates a particular pedagogical dilemma. A couple of years ago I was teaching an introductory course in Christian ethics. I was determined not to start with some "classic" Lutheran ethics—say Emil Brunner's *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*. I was afraid that when I then assigned readings from womanist, lesbian liberationist, Black liberationist, and other authors, the students would treat the Brunner text as "basic Lutheran ethics," and treat the others like planets orbiting around Brunner's sun. Accordingly I did not assign any comprehensive classical treatment. We did not read only contemporary texts—we read Luther's *Die Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*. But the students ended up complaining, justifiably, that we spend much of the semester reading critiques, but that they lacked the background to know what was being criticized. For instance, we read an explicitly lesbian critique of Tillich's theological ethics by Carter Hayward. Not only had few if any of the students read Tillich; most had not read enough of anyone who would enable them to recognize the traits that Hayward was picking out for criticism.

Feminist theologians have rightly criticized those, whose approach to "integrating gender into the theological curriculum" is to "add women and stir." Instead feminists have insisted on "changing the recipe."¹⁰³ "Add women and stir" is inadequate not only for men as well as for women, and for the same basic reason. Patriarchal and male-dominant recipes are bad for

¹⁰³ Cf. Johnson, *Friends of God*, 33

both women and men, although in ways that are different and not to be compared, especially if the aim of that comparison is to trivialize women's oppression.

To focus the point, let us consider the theology of sin. Valerie Saiving, Judith Plaskow,¹⁰⁴ and others have pointed out how male-dominated theology has eluded the specificity of women's sin in male-denominated culture by expanding typically male sin of that culture to cover "human" sin in general. Men's sin in that culture doesn't suffer the same fate. It is noticed and noted. But the problem is not just an accurate interpretation of sin. The problem is that male-dominant culture constructs men as that kind of sinner. Theology should serve the ultimate goal of not just accurately describing specific states of sin, but overcoming-or at least taking a trajectory toward overcoming that sin.

In order to integrate gender in the theological curriculum, we must move two steps away from treating that project as primarily a women's issue. First, we must be clear and make clear that feminist theology is not just for women. Although this point has been made often and for a long time now, we must still say it in season and out of season. Second, we must emphasize that paying attention to gender in theology means both theological reflection upon women's experience and theological reflection upon men's experience, in the "andrist" mode that I have sketched. Our curricula need to acquaint students with both types of reflection. Until they do so, the very notion of "gender" in theological education will retain a specifically female coding, which means that it will constantly be struggling to emerge from subsidiary status.

¹⁰⁴ Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980).

“ENGENDERING” IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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The theme of gender difference should, of course, be part of one's reflections throughout one's theological training, entering into both the content and the methodology of one's studies and thus also into the areas of practical theology. Our awareness of persons as women and men is a distinction, which substantially determines our perceptions and actions, especially when we are not conscious of it. It is a fundamental insight of feminism that, in a patriarchal context, women are put at a disadvantage by the denial of the form which gender difference takes in that context and its effects on the structure of the society and on personal life histories. Thus it is of great importance for theological education to confront this issue consciously.

However, it is by no means clear which approach to the issue of gender difference has a constructive effect on the problems of justice between women and men. There are two difficult conclusions, which emerge from feminist discourse.

In the 1980s especially, and into the early 1990s, feminist approaches to gender issues were basically focused on the difference between the sexes. They sought to raise consciousness and appreciation of women's lives, their understanding of themselves and the world from their point of view as female subjects, and to propose new versions of this understanding, which could lead to new ways of living. The assump-

tion that beyond all other differences women were bound together by their existence as women was very productive at first. It offered women the possibility of identifying with one another and the possibility of solidarity. It brought out essential aspects of the realities in which women live, that could then be penetrated by analysis. But in the long run, this viewpoint, of only focusing on the differences among women became problematic, since it took no account of the factual differences among women themselves. It also involved contrary to its own intention, the danger of prescribing set gender roles, thus confirming the pattern of gender-oriented perception. In other words, any time one makes the difference between women and men the basis of one's thinking, however much that difference is described, one runs the risk of reinforcing sexism, against all intentions.

For this reason, and also because they no longer saw themselves in the self-descriptions of their mothers' generation, young women since the 1990s have turned to theoretical concepts which aimed to deconstruct the polarity of gender. There is also interest in those approaches that offer possible methods of observing and describing the way we continuously "do gender" in the everyday rituals of communication and social behavior. These ap-

proaches draw attention to the way gender roles have developed as part of cultures, and to the great variety of possible ways of being a woman or a man. This is their strength. But they also have a weakness in that there is a risk of relativizing the meaning of gender difference to the point where we lose sight of the facts of women and men's life situations and the injustice, which is empirically evident in them.

This points to the necessity of trying to keep "engendering" somewhere between these two poles, that is—as in Carol Hagemann-White's postulated method for gender research—to take the viewpoint of gender difference seriously, and to disregard it, by turns. In other words, we should assume the existence of gender difference and describe its phenomena and effects. At the same time we must keep making it clear that this perspective from which we see the difference is a construct, showing that it is the cultural product of interaction between women and men in a specific social context and that in principle it can take completely different forms and can change.

This approach also has its counterpart in the Biblical witness. On the one hand, we find the assumption that human beings are created in the image of God, as women and men, different beings related to one another, but having equal value and dignity. And there is also no real area of experience beyond this difference. On the other hand, this difference is transcended and surpassed in Christ: "...there is no longer male and female..." (Gal 3:27f). In other words, there is no ultimate definition of what it is to be a woman or a man. Each definition can be changed, surpassed, relativized by God. The ways in which women and men live, each for herself or himself and in relation to one another, are not defined; instead, in Christ, they constitute an open space of infinite possibilities.

As the basis of my further reflections, I would like this approach to be heard: The attention which is given to the problems and questions of gender difference in theological education must itself be open to question. Whatever aspect is recognized of the structure and form which gender difference takes must be carefully perceived and heeded, but it must equally be regarded as a phenomenon of transition and change. Particularly because the women's movement has brought about a state of flux in gender roles, we must keep track of this flow and understand its diverse forms. Yet we

must also make sure that gender difference itself does not disappear from the agenda as an outdated issue, since this would have immediate negative effects on women's interests and scope for action.

So much for the basics. I would now like to mention five points, which must be considered for the "engendering" of theological education:

- a) Gender difference within the community of learners and teachers;
- b) Gender difference in the context of the society;
- c) Repercussions of the analysis of gender difference on theology, its symbols, thinking patterns and language
- d) The consequences for the practices of the church;
- e) An integrated study of theology.

a) A first and important point is attention to *the representation of and the community among women and men as learners and as teachers*. It continues to be a fact that it is primarily women (even though by no means all women) who are researchers in, and teachers of gender topics. Thus it is indispensable *that the number of women who teach be increased*, so that the issues of gender difference may take their place in the context of teaching.

This also means that attention must be given to a *just distribution of the resources available at seminars and educational institutions*—to women and to men—such as jobs, grants and research facilities. It would make sense to have a period of transition in which women with equal qualifications were given preference for positions, to make up for their relative under-representation.

It is equally important *that attention be paid to the communication between women and men during teaching sessions*. There are now plenty of studies and insights about specific patterns of communication between women and men. It is well known that frequency of participation in discussions is often very unevenly distributed, that more attention is given to arguments according to the gender of the speaker and that stimuli

to further discussion and achievements tend to be ascribed to men rather than women. Seminars and other teaching situations should give time and space for bringing up these concerns and raising consciousness of them. It can be especially meaningful to do so when a conflict arises among the students of which gender difference is a significant cause. It can be just as important for the teaching staff to make it a rule to bring up the subject for discussion, to raise awareness to it, and perhaps at times to assign students to observe the pattern of communication in the group from the viewpoint of gender difference. Awareness of the way gender functions in the learning situation will stimulate and enrich the learning process itself, and will heighten attention to comparable processes in the future working life of the students, for instance in parish groups or religious instruction classes.

Finally, there are *situations in which women have a particular need to be promoted or supported*. This is the case when they are numerically a small minority and their status is therefore dubious and difficult. There also continue to be many women who need support from the teaching staff, or from the other students as well, to increase their feeling of self-worth, and give them the courage to come out in the open with their own convictions or actions and to exert influence.

b) If students are to discover the significance of gender difference and the methodical tools with which to deal with it productively and insightfully, they need to know theories that help them understand and give shape to their individual perceptions of and experiences with their own sexuality and their relations with the opposite sex. *Thus theological education must include, in the context of an introduction to sociological analysis, an introduction to theories of gender difference*, so that students develop their own awareness of and positions regarding this topic. To study theology means that one acquires a reflective way of perceiving and interpreting reality, in which the world of texts, symbols and signs of the Christian tradition enters into dialogue with contemporary perceptions and theoretical analyses of reality, penetrates and is in turn penetrated by them. As an elementary knowledge of economics, politics, sociology and psychology is acquired, which give shape and depth to one's perception of reality, gender should be among the topics

covered within each of them, since it has a sustained influence on the life experience and opportunities of both women and men.

c) *But consideration of gender also has substantial repercussions on theology itself*. As one becomes conscious of the effects of gender difference in one's own life situation, awareness grows of sexist patterns of thinking and language in theology. And the transformation in the self-understanding of women and men gives rise to the need, not simply to reproduce religious symbolizations in the form which has been handed down to us, but rather to investigate their scope and deduce their meanings anew, and to change the way in which they are represented and worded.

For theological education, this means that *the acquisition of knowledge of the thinking and forms of devotion of the Christian tradition must enter into a dialogue with the religious self-understanding of the students*. The tradition should not be an authority and a norm, which limits and defines a student's thinking. It should rather, in all its worthiness and its dignity, be a dialogue partner which is to be taken extraordinarily seriously, which inspires and tempts students to do their own theology. By testing it against their own life experience, against the crises and limitations they experience, but also against steps taken towards liberation, students gain an important criterion for judging whether theology is of any help in living their daily lives. This includes testing it against their specific experiences as women and men in their particular social context.

Theological education, therefore, should not just introduce students to the tradition and teach them to know and understand it, but must also promote and take seriously the expression of subjective experience, reflection upon it and its religious interpretation, by both women and men, and bring this into dialogue with the answers and thinking patterns of the tradition.

d) *Finally, theological education must translate consciousness of gender issues into guidance for practice in the church*. In all areas of practical theology—ecclesiology, homiletics, liturgics, pastoral counseling, religious education—one question to be asked and reflected on is what the relevant practice of the church means in terms of gender relations.

Among the many possible examples, I will take one: What does it mean to take gender difference seriously in reflecting on the Christian wedding ceremony?

- The first requirement is to form an idea of the situation of marriage in the society, and of the situation of women on one hand, and of men on the other, in marriage. It should be thought through, what a perspective on this situation would look like which would correspond to the Christian understanding of love, salvation and all human beings as children of God.
- The next question is, how does this prior understanding come through in the pastoral conversation with the couple planning marriage? How do I perceive the different situations of the woman and the man? What typical patterns of gender difference do I recognize? What are the particular issues for this couple, and how do I deal with them? What does all this have to do with my being myself, a woman or a man?
- Next: How do I plan the wedding service and the sermon? What images, what language, what symbols shall I use to represent the situation of this couple and their hopes for their life together? How shall I illustrate the roles of woman and man? What patterns for communication do I want to get across to them, perhaps subconsciously as well? What images for a fulfilled married life shall I present to them? What images of God shall I propose in the language I use, and what is their meaning for woman and man?
- Finally: What images of life together for women and men are coined in the public relations work of the church? How do we pray for marriages and partnerships during Sunday worship? Which issues are in the foreground, and which do we systematically hush up?

In the same way as I have done here using the example of the wedding ceremony, we could take up all

the other areas of practical work in the church and demonstrate the relevance of gender issues within them. The consequences must be drawn for training persons to do this work. In general, it is a matter of calling attention to issues of gender difference as an essential category for learning and for teaching, of acquiring theoretical models with which to analyze and understand them, of spelling out their existential dimensions in one's own life and of reflecting on the consequences for theological language, the use of symbols and Christian devotional practices.

e) For many women theologians, it is important that their theological reflections, their every day lives and their spiritual practice not be separate worlds, but rather related to one another, influencing and inspiring one another. I hesitate to designate this as something specific to women. I think it is true that there are more women who suffer from such divisions into separate worlds. But there are also men who do so, and quite a few women who take the divisions as much for granted as many men do.

Nevertheless, that theology is an area of knowledge which has to do with the whole person, which must penetrate the soul as well as the brain and be clearly related to the concrete reality of a person's life, has been one of the demands of feminist theology since its beginnings. I continue to believe that it is an important demand with regard to education for theological students. Inasmuch as in their future careers they will be challenged to interpret their theology in terms of people's experiences and questions, theological students should learn during their training how to proceed in this interpretation, and to read persons and the circumstances in which they live as thoroughly as the texts. Inasmuch as they will be challenged to portray the Gospel in many shapes and forms, their training should include this diversity of shapes, forms and methods. And inasmuch as they will face questions and challenges not only with regard to their knowledge, but also in matters of faith and action, they should learn not only to think, but also to pray and to act.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Methodology

Group discussions were planned in such a way that participants would have opportunities to mix in various groups to further develop networking, learning and sharing with one another. The task was to meet as regional groups to share the current status of feminist theologies in their respective seminaries and to discuss the barriers and opportunities encountered by them. They also met in four different groups based on their area of specialization such as, Biblical Studies, Systematics/Church History, Practical Theology and New Approaches, setting their own questions and tasks.

Regional Report—Africa

Present Status

Nigeria Lutheran Seminary

- The seminary does not have any female members of staff on the faculty.
- Gender issues are not included in the curriculum at all levels.
- The number of female students vary from one year to another. In the year 2000, there were 2 female students out of 60 and in 2001 there is one student out of 50.
- The Church has been ordaining women. However, ordination is limited to the already married women. There is no written regulation on

this but is applied as a rule by the selection committee.

Namibia Paulinum Theological Seminary

- 20 out of 30 students are women.
- Ordination of women has been accepted for a while now.
- The number of women pastors is increasing, especially at parish level, but not at administrative level.
- No Namibian female lecturers at the seminary.
- Marriage prevents women to go further in their theological studies.
- At policy level, all disciplines are supposed to include a gender perspective. In practice this is not the case.
- There is a course on Women Studies which is offered as an optional subject.

Zimbabwe United Theological Seminary

- There is one local female lecturer.
- Other women pastors do not have enough qualification to teach at the seminary.
- The male staff members and students are against the teaching of feminist theology or even the mention of the term "feminist theology".

- The Zimbabwe society is also against feminism.
- At the seminary the greatest opposition comes from the Methodist and Anglican students because their churches do not ordain women.

Tanzania Makumira Theological Seminary

- The seminary has a few female teaching staff.
- At the moment the number of female students has dropped drastically because
 - Some parishes do not ordain women. Some of those who do, put the condition that the female pastors must be married to a man from the same diocese.
 - Some of the selection committee members are male pastors who oppose female candidates. One of the arguments against women's ordination is that most of the women who have been married and ordained have marital problems. It is worse when the woman pastor goes for further studies.
- Fortunately there is now a committee that has been set up to look at the curriculum for gender inclusion. This committee has women members.

How can we mutually strengthen gender perspectives in the curriculum?

- Due to political democracy, governments and donors of theological institutions are pressing for change. i.e. demand about 50:50 participation of male and female students, staff members and feminist theology in the curriculum. However there has been resistance from theological institutions.
- Identify and mentor women with potential to go for further studies up to Ph.D. level.
- Sponsors must offer scholarships to the whole family to preserve marriage and promote the development of spouses as well.

- African male theologians need to support the programs of the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians.
- The engendering of the theological curriculum must be discussed in ACTEA meetings. Theological institutions should hold workshops on engendering the curriculum.
- Promotion of sharing resource persons within the region who are knowledgeable about gender issues.

Regional Report— Latin America

Present Status

- There is a difference in stages at which seminaries are, with regard to including feminist perspectives in the curriculum.
- There are no specific studies done on feminist perspectives in the Lutheran institutions in Latin America.
- Where elements of feminist studies exist, they are mostly done in ecumenical/inter-denomination settings.
- Women mostly initiate and are more pro-active in the process of introducing themes or subjects related to the study.
- No unified efforts in place to engender theological education in the region.
- There is a conservative attitude toward the interpretation of the Bible, literature, and patriarchal approach and oppressive cultural ideas.
- Where female professors make a move toward including feminist perspectives, it is suspect.

- Women Studies or women theology seems to gain more acceptance but are restricted to women, taught by women.
- Feminist methodology and perspective is often considered as part of an overall project of liberation of the oppressed which is confused with liberation theology for women. Thus even as a liberation theology, the focus is women.

How can we mutually strengthen gender perspectives in the curriculum?

- One of the approaches for engendering theological education is organizing workshops for the professors, both men and women.
- From 1999, there has been a more concerted effort or intention in incorporating gender perspectives in the seminary teachings. More men are beginning to have an interest.
- We need to call on the churches to allow as well as encourage the active/equal participation of men/women in theological education and to see it as an aspect of faith rather than women issues.
- We need to call on seminary professors to have shared responsibility here.

**Regional Report—
North America and the
Caribbean**

Present Status

- The inclusion of feminist perspectives in theology and theological education has gained wide acceptance, although with struggles here and there.
- Has allowed for a balanced theological understanding, ministry and relationship in ministry.

- Has promoted gender equality in theological education.
- Has often provided for new ways of understanding of biblical hermeneutics and pastoral ministry.
- Has improved the quality of theological education, transformed seminary education, church's ministry and worship life.
- Including feminist perspectives has brought new life and hope for the theological institutions and subsequently, new life and ministry in the congregation.
- However there exists some elements of fear and suspicion about the whole issue.
- Theological education has become multi-cultural, with different voices. Female students also have role models.

How can we mutually strengthen gender perspectives in the curriculum?

- Engendering theological education enables the church to be more honest.
- Feminist perspectives have certainly changed theological education, the congregation and the church through their contributions in the various fields of theology, ecclesiology and leadership. However there are certain barriers:
- Prejudice against women ordination and ministry.
- Politicizing gender issues.
- Women often become barriers to one another.
- Seminaries and churches need to critically and positively evaluate the use of language.
- Churches need to give balanced support and mentoring to both men and women in

theological training. This will minimize competition and encourage mutuality.

- Churches need to make provision for including more women professors in the seminaries.

Regional Report—Europe

Present Status

- There is a significant growth in the number of female theological students and educators, some institutions having taken more interest.
- However there are only a small number of women teachers in theological institutions and in some, there is none at all.
- Civil authorities lend support for the inclusion of feminist theology.
- Qualified female theologians often find it hard to get positions.

- There are more number of female students than males in some theological institutions. Sadly, not all the female students graduate.
- There still some pockets of resistance.
- Feminist theological perspectives are not fully integrated.
- Some institutions recently disfavored women's ordination (Norway).

How can we mutually strengthen gender perspectives in the curriculum?

- Creation of more positions for teaching feminist theology in theological institutions.
- Seminaries need to be more intentional in providing/recommending materials on feminist perspectives in their reading list for the various courses.
- Churches need to give more support.
- Finding finances for studies on feminist perspectives is difficult.

CURRICULUM FORMATION

A. Group Report On New Approaches

1. What "disqualified" / subjugated knowledges need to be brought into the academy from your context? How could we choose to bring the knowledge of the academy to the grass roots?

- A lot of the subjugated knowledge expresses itself in stories. Stories reveal the broken or subjugated histories of people. There is a need to include these stories in our theological reflection. Luther developed much of his own theological insights based his own personal experience and through the telling of stories to his students. In classical theological reflection we see a tendency of doctrinalization and reduction of life-expressions. We have to move away from the dichotomy between doctrinal expressions and storytelling.
- Classical theology has been constructing a macrocosmic view of the world and reality. We are also aware of a modern tendency even in Europe to theologize on a local microcosmic level where relationships can be built up.
- Localizing theological education can be relevantly done in small study groups. We realize the limitations of enclosed studies where everyone lives on campus causes competition for posts and for visibility within the given theological paradigm.
- Grassroots communities doing theology by themselves are often not included into our academic theological work and theologians coming from these communities into the academy

are delocalized. People are assimilated to a standard of theological work and dialogue is often left out.

- We have to revive the mystical elements in religious experience and we realize that a lot of practical knowledge that has developed over hundreds of years has been subjugated in our ways of doing theology.
- This knowledge of experience and knowledge of all senses must be included in all academic theological reflection. In this way, we can open ourselves up to the capacity of being constructed by the rich knowledges of peoples.

2. How could we choose to bring these knowledges into the academy?

- Academic studies have to be linked to involvement in non-academic programs. Assessment methods of bringing people into the academy need to be reviewed. New pedagogical methods have to be developed. We need to bring other methods of evaluation and teaching, such as dance, literary expressions, music, art... into the academy.
- Collaborative work should be encouraged and honored and not only individual work.
- We have to identify marginalized groups in our society and include them into our academic work. For example, the study of church history can be started with the personal and local and then move outwards and backwards.

- Emerging theologies that are not yet elaborated have to be taken seriously.
- We need to gather the memories and different knowledges and relocate them to the places where people are.
- We need to ask the question, whose voice is missing?
- The concept of conviviality (*convivencia*) which has been effectively discussed and used in inter-religious dialogue can also be applied in the theological reflection and action together with the marginalized in our societies.

3. How can we build the capacity of our institutions in engendering theological education for transformation?

- All our reflections on engendering theological education have to be applied in all degree programs, including doctoral studies.
- Those who can, should celebrate the gift of liminality: being able to introduce the issue of gender across the borders of traditional fields of study.
- The marginalized subjects in theological studies have an in-built possibility of influencing the other subjects by cooperation and by crossing over.
- It is necessary to provide a safe space, outside the institution where students and faculty can find a platform of expressing their dissatisfaction with the way gender issues are dealt with inside the institution.
- These spaces outside can help to focus the anger and the experience of the marginalized.
- Work with outside lobby groups in the church as well as in the community is needed for applying pressure on the institution.

- It is necessary to capitalize on the experience of those who are involved in theological education among women at different levels, academic, pastoral and popular.
- It could be helpful to provoke competition between institutions and to build up alliances of institutions against each other.
- It is necessary to hold institutions accountable on what they are doing and if necessary confronting them with their own written policies.
- It is necessary to build up ecumenical as well as inter faith alliances.
- A networking of disciplines has to be promoted in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences amongst us.
- We should share policy documents and positive examples of engendering institutions with each other.
- We should provide a space to open gender issues up. Often such a provision is received with great openness among other faculty and students. (For example campus-wide surveys of how gender is included in the courses.)
- Courses for the faculty on gender analytical tools can be offered.
- In general, for engendering theological institutions, we have to work on the level of strategy, advocacy and method.

4. What critical resources from other disciplines are useful for program development in theology?

- Social history of women and gender issues (clothing, birth control and family planning, food, health, and so on)
- Gender studies in general Gender development theories

- Cultural anthropology, Personality training
- Conflict management tools
- Social analysis
- Human rights tools
- System analysis
- Pedagogical theory
- Psychology
- Issue oriented approaches to see how issues get genderized
- Action-Reflection model
- Feminist theology is by far not enough
- Philosophy

- The point is not to teach these disciplines on a parallel basis, but to integrate them into theological, biblical and historical reflection.

Group members

Dr Beverley Haddad, South Africa

Dr Kjell Nordstokke, Norway

Dr Andreas Nehring, Germany

Dr Hisako Kinukawa, Japan

Dr Connie Kleingartner, USA

Dr Allie Ernst, Australia

Ms Priscilla Singh, India

B. Group Report On Biblical Studies

Questions:

1. What is the sociological context in which the Biblical contexts arose and redacted?

- Who are visible?
- Who are invisibilized?
- What are the contexts that are reflected in the Biblical text?

2. What exegetical methods can be included that contribute to a focus on gender?

- sociological approach
- reader/redactor criticism

3. What hermeneutical tools/principles can we employ to identify and overcome gender bias in traditional biblical interpretation?

4. How can we best deal with the androcentric language within the biblical texts? How does this impinge on translation practices?

Methodology

A. We affirm the continuing usefulness of the traditional methodologies, i.e. the historical critical method [history, form criticism, source criticism, etc.] These tools may be quite useful when used with gender awareness.

B. We affirm the importance of multiple methodologies i.e. integration of methodologies.

C. We affirm the importance of a sociological approach for engendering theological education.

D. Anthropological, cross cultural and phenomenological approaches provide models for understanding.

E. The Reader Response approach received a mixed response from our group. We emphasized that is must be post-critical, not pre-critical.

Hermeneutical principles

A. A gendered hermeneutical vision enables the reader to see what may otherwise be invisible.

B. Oppressive biblical texts

- Include Texts of Terror to be read in memorium of oppressed women.
- Oppressive texts may not be as oppressive as thought if properly understood.
- Or oppressive texts may be unsalvageable, but other texts may counteract them.

C. We must ask the gender questions for every text we read.

D. Intertextual [O.T. and N.T.] insights are useful. Sometimes the N.T. interprets O.T. texts in a patriarchal manner.

Translation

A. Translations may render aspects of the text invisible, and may at times be more patriarchal than the biblical text itself.

B. Research... Research must include gender specific questions. There are "clues" for what is not explicitly found in the text.

Pedagogy

A. Our teaching must include treatment of the category of patriarchy...What is it? How patriarchy is

particular to time and place and class. Patriarchy is not monolithic, but nuanced by context.

B. In biblical teaching we must recover invisible agents, e.g. women, slaves, and the poor.

C. We must raise questions about women in patriarchal society.... How did they get their needs met? [Manipulation?] Mother as matriarch. How are women empowered in patriarchal society?

D. We affirm the importance of dealing with difficult texts in our teaching. We have a responsibility. Sometimes we need to make "easy" texts difficult.

Language and imagery

A. There are problems of androcentric language in the Bible in pronouns for God, metaphors. Is the God of the O.T. male? In some indigenous traditions the concept of God is not gendered.

B. We want to raise up those biblical texts which have feminine language and images for God, e.g. personified Wisdom. Yet we also need to be aware that metaphors can promote gender stereotyping, e.g. mother always representing nurturing.

C. We need to raise awareness of translation issues i.e. patriarchy in the translation itself. Do translator manuals deal with this issue?

D. The issue of how to speak of God in our teaching is important, but we have no consensus. Should

we use the divine name "Yahweh" instead of "the LORD" although it is offensive to Jews [who are not in our classes]? Should we just use the term "God" [which can help to connect the biblical text and Christianity to pre Christian indigenous religious traditions about the divine]? What do we do with "Father" language?

E. How do we speak of human beings and gender in the biblical texts?

F. We found the issues of biblical language differed radically depending on our own language contexts.

G. We found that there are no easy answers concerning speaking about God. We have a patriarchal scripture. What do we do with it?

Group Members:

Prof. Dr Irene Foulkes, Costa Rica

Dr Katy Griffin, USA

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Dr Martin Nelumbu, Namibia

Dr Monica Melanchthon, India

Dr Robinson Radjagukguk, Indonesia

Dr Sarah Dille, Canada

C. Group Report On Systematics/Church History

Questions:

1. How does the integration of gender perspective change how we think about specific theological topics such as the doctrine of God or Christology?

2. What pedagogical practices enable and reflect the integration of gender perspectives in systematic theological curricula?

3. What makes systematic theology “systematic”? Is the term useful? Does the integration of gender perspectives suggest new conceptions of the organization of theological disciplines?

4. What are the helpful guidelines for developing entire courses dedicated to gender perspectives in theology? A curriculum that incorporates gender perspectives across the board? A combination of the two? What determines which approach is best in particular context?

5. How can the integration of gender perspectives include “andrist” theology and theologies of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered experience and flourishing?

Summary of comments

1. We have a two-pronged task

- a) To examine the field of systematics
- b) To define/redefine the entire curricular approach

2. What makes systematic theology “systematic”?

- a) Who defines the “norm”? Who defines “the system?”

- The very term “systematic” conveys a sense of ahistoricism and universalism
- Feminist theologians and others question this very idea
- Yet how does one teach students to critique “the system” from a perspectival point of view if they have not been taught/have some grasp of the “systematic foundations” they are to critique?

b) Do we even need systematics?

- Yes, in order to teach students to think systematically, to know the difference between reflecting theologically and “flipping through the Bible”

c) What are the foundations/prerequisites required?

- Classical philosophy? History? Gender? etc.
- These are determinative of “systematics”
- Requiring a foundational course in “gender” will affect the way students critique all future courses.

3. Questions of identity

- a) What/where is our identity as Lutherans?
- b) Questions of feminist/andrist get very close to these questions of identity
- c) In mission churches, dogmatism/Lutheran identity tends to be closely tied together

4. Teaching of systematics

- a) Traditional:
Systematicians tend to be more dogmatic in their teaching. Students are more often seen as “empty sacks” to be filled. Questions and critical thinking are not often encouraged.

- b) Alternative:
Give students the tools they need to construct their own theology. Encourage critical thinking.
- c) "Systematics does not have to be dogmatic—it can be sparkling and life giving."

5. How we teach

- a) New ways of approaching the teaching of systematics: it's not just *what* we teach but *how* we teach.
 - The goal is to give students tools so that they may learn to think theologically.
- b) If we wish to encourage the "alternative" model, then we need to reconsider:
 - the way we teach (not just lecturing)
 - the questions we ask
 - the assignments we make
 - the sources we utilize (including alternative sources, such as film, other media)
 - the creative use and role of experience

Example: Experimenting with Christology—"How has Christ influenced your self-identity/understanding?", thus helping students see how this "abstract" concept relates to their own lives. The goal is to involve students in learning, teach them to ask questions, motivate them to desire more.

- c) Systematics tends to be 2 dimensional: "If this, then that" A third dimension then needs to be included: sensing, feeling. God is known through sensing—as African ancestors are sensed as a real presence.
- d) In the West, we are post-Enlightenment thinkers. We cannot escape this, do away with this. The Enlightenment rules.
 - We tend to debate in rational categories. We must not deny the third dimension and

have to recreate the mysticism of medieval—the personal experience, of being united with God.

- e) But the 'Enlightenment' did not influence Africa. The very idea of "theological education" is European. Lutherans came to Africa and set up schools. Gifted students were sent off to European schools, to read and study like Europeans. They became separated from their context and were "outsiders" when they returned home. Therefore there is a need to africanize the theological curriculum. "Is this an ideal Jesus or is he real? Show me."
- f) Tremendous emphasis on experience
Our model is to give 200 pages of review of literature, and then go to experience. But feminist theology starts with experience, then intersects it with Luther, etc. Students come with their testimonies. How do we get them through the system without losing their original gift? We do not want the students to forget their voice, but help them reflect on their experience within the community and beyond to see other people's experience (Luther, Tillich, etc.). This exposure can strengthen their own understanding and increases the ability to ask questions, connect all the stories and be enriched by them to gain new dimensions of experience. Finding an identity comes from both confronting and being confronted by others.
- g) Need to consider the epistemological/praxiological model, with lines intersecting. We need our students to actually be "doing something".
 - It is real praxis that brings transformation. So need to integrate praxis, for example the issue of violence against women.
 - Need to make systematics relevant to document like LWF's Document "Churches say NO to Violence against Women." Seminaries should use such a document, so it becomes a practical part of teaching.

h) Assessment

- Teachers do recognize that students have different needs—to be pushed, challenged, listened to, praised, etc. This is not reflected in dominant systematics. Analytical is privileged. Therefore we need to validate that you learn by appreciation, not just critical reflection.
- How do you assess the work of the student? Experiences? Grades?

Harmony with students consists of Love/commitment to students. This is not always easy. Teacher's vocation depends on appreciation, listening to and learning from students in order to understand his/her interpretation.

6. Who can teach?

- a) Women teachers by their very presence embody a gendered perspective, as do women students.
- b) What if the professor is male? Sometimes, the female models are not there.
- c) Women teachers change things. But also important/crucial is consciousness raising, for both men and women. Need to encourage the critical way of thinking. The existential may be there, but it may be silenced.

7. What to teach?

- a) In the African context, professor draws upon African traditional religions in order to tie concepts to students' experiences.
- b) In American historical classes, professor draws upon a plurality of sources, all centered on the same time period or issue, in order to ensure that many voices are heard.
- c) Is there a single "African theology" or a "European theology"?

- d) "Christian truth is the same, but answers are different in different contexts."

Epistemology

- Putting basic building blocks together kills it. In Africa, you live with it, you don't kill the thing. You move with it, live with it. Sense, mind and heart.
- Europe does not deny senses. God is revealing. So one does not just analyze, and dissect. Experiential and existential are emphasized as well.

8. Teaching Confessions

- a) We do not have a Confessions person at this conference
- b) How does one teach the confessions from a gendered perspective?
- c) At least need to teach the Confessions contextually.
 - Teaching the context, the male nature. This was the situation at the time.
 - So can we "pray this now?"
 - Martin Luther built so much of his theology on his experience, and yet some of his statements illustrate the dangers of relying too heavily on experience.

9. Beyond seminary education

- a) We need to address issues of gender from varied levels like congregations, Churchwide/synods/agencies/etc.
 - They need to be prepared to receive women pastors.
 - People are not stupid. They know the questions. We do not need to tell them or impose on them but collect their questions, problems, issues and answers. Congregations,

church leaders and the faculty need to move together. None of this negates the importance of having women in seminary classrooms.

10. Identifying steps, different models

- a) We can not just list the end goals. The Holy Spirit is acting. We need different approaches because of where we are at this time. It might start as separate course, yet aiming for mainstreaming.
- b) If this is seen as important, it will be seen as enriching, informing, and will become a general understanding throughout the whole church.

11. Back to the beginning: What makes systematic theology systematic?

- a) Maybe the term is not a good idea.
- b) Luther was not systematic.
- c) Conflation of systematics and history—each go into each other's territory to discuss.
- d) Will there ever be a meta-feminist theology?

- Just as there is bad "male theology," so there is bad "feminist theology." A current 2 volume set appears "dropped from heaven," universal. There is no evidence that it is perspectival in any way.

- Feminist Theology is multidisciplinary that includes history, preaching, pastoral care, etc.

- e) We are dealing with not just the gospel and culture, but with issues of belief. From time to time, we undergo a paradigm shift, when one part of our belief system begins leaking... We must build a bridge. For example, start with "uni," not tri. Then go to triune. Then question more.

- f) "But there is one God. The language is limited." Within the particulars there is one God.

- Is God acting in history?

- Pentecost—in diversity they were understood better than when they spoke in one language.

- Keeping together the one and the many.

12. Some specific recommendations

- a) Assign/make available readings from other parts of the world.
- b) Bring in visiting professors from other parts of the world to teach (LWF does sponsor an exchange program—they facilitate transportation—but both schools have to agree)
- c) Brainstorming/workshops by discipline.
- d) 1 or 2 day retreat for theologians/faculty.
- e) Get top names to discuss with faculty and/or students.
- f) Explore the praxis model.

Questions

What does the issue of engendering mean for the methodology of practical theology?

- How can we give attention to the communication of men and women in the learning and teaching situation?
- What fields of practical theology are the most important and most significant from the gender perspective?
- How can we establish a good relationship between church praxis and theological education praxis?

How can we establish a kind of "wholistic learning" that integrates brain, soul and body and makes it possible to find a kind of theology that is closely connected to the questions of daily life?

D. Group Report On Practical Theology

Strategies to bring up the topic of gender

- More women as teachers are needed in the faculties.
- It can be helpful to do research on gender issues on the basis of surveys about the gender situation.
- Training of the teaching staff in gender issues is necessary.
- It is important to keep up the issue of gender with different angles and perspectives also if there is resistance against it.
- If the topic arises in a group situation it should be picked up.

Methodology

- Practical theology should not be the last of the theological disciplines but the leading perspective for all.
- There shall be opportunities for students and teaching staff to come in contact with life outside the campus and to reflect on it in their education and research.
- There should be a trustworthy learning environment that creates a good atmosphere of speaking, learning, communicating. (different methods, group discussions, groups of women only and men only and mixed groups, both sides are to be heard.)
- There should be co-teaching of men and women and reflection on this.
- Attention has to be given to the points, where students or staff are suffering from their gender situation.

- It is necessary to learn to speak honestly about fears: Why are men afraid of women? Why are women afraid of men?
- Each side should hear the other: Men shall ask women about their situation, fears, hope, faith. Women shall ask men about their situation, fears, hope, faith.

Important and significant fields to work on

- The question of liturgical language.
- The question of leadership, partnership, power.
- The relation of the different kinds of ministry: pastors, deacons etc.
- How does the cultural role of mother or father influence the understanding of ministry?

Spirituality

- It is important to experience women and men planning and leading the liturgy in the context of education.
- Spirituality should be an integrated factor of theological education.
- The spiritual life of the community of a seminary should be analyzed from a gender perspective.

Resources

- How can the LWF help with the exchange of resources like books, curriculums etc.?

In the end the discussion of the group came to the personal images of being a man or a woman, the question of gender-identity, the genuine self-understanding as men or women.

Group Members

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Rev. Sabina Lumwe, Tanzania

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Message of the Cross: Affirming life for all

BIBLE STUDY I

Dr Andreas NEHRING, Germany

Theme: Giving Space

Text: Genesis 26: 12–22



The death of thousands of people on the 11th of September in New York is followed by extinction of some words that have been in common use until recently. The media tells us that after the 11th of September, nothing will be like it had been before. Even the language that we have used until now is not easily parting from our lips any more. Some of the words we had used till now are revealed as a tissue of lies of the so-called 'modern western civilized' world. One of the keywords of this modern myth according to Dieter Thoma, Professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Gallen, has been the Global Village.¹⁰⁵ Even before this term has become fashionable, people used to say, "the world is a village" especially when we met somebody unexpectedly somewhere, in a hotel, at a conference or even in a traffic jam. If the world were a village, then we would indeed, know those whom we meet and we would meet only those whom we know. The term 'global village' hints at direct communication and it hints at easy solution for our common living together. Everybody in the village knows each other and nobody is anonymous. The dream of the global village is the dream of western modernity. It is a dream of solutions that can be reached at by all equal inhabitants of this village, the dream of world peace and the dream of the West to extend our concept of rationality, equality and

brotherhood of all humankind. The fiction of a global village has been destroyed by those, who do not believe in this kind of brotherhood and who do not accept the invitation to be part of a western idyll.

Although the call for world peace and endeavors to establish peace among the nations have been strong during the past decades, news of communal and religious and cultural wars are filling our papers not only since September 11th. Nobody can determine that the conditions for peace, development and human cooperation have grown considerably in the human family since inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues have been conducted. We even have to admit that religions and religious convictions play an important role in the clashes and riots that threaten peace and human relationship worldwide. None of the religions can claim for themselves that they have not been involved in such conflicts. The role of religions in human conflicts is ambivalent. No religion has succeeded in creating the new peaceful human being or a new society free from violence and human conflicts. Religions even seem to contribute tremendously to a "clash of civilizations."

Although some religions claim to be traditionally more peaceful like Buddhism, even they are, time and again,

¹⁰⁵ in Süddeutsche Zeitung, September 14th 2001, 17.

troubled with conflicts, as we all know from Sri Lanka. The recent conflicts and the bombings of Afghanistan also give raise to the question whether an often claimed theory is still appropriate: that people who live in prosperous regions of the world tend to be more peaceful, because they have everything they need and even enough to share with others, while people who live in poor regions like wastelands or even deserts have to fight for their daily bread and push away other competitors.

Israel and the Old Testament world is basically a desert culture, although there are many green pastures to which the Lord guides God's sheep. Many quarrels between the people of Israel and the people of the neighboring tribes are reported in the Old Testament, as the text in Genesis 26, where the people of Isaac solved a problem with people of another religion and culture in a very interesting way.

What happened in Gen. 26:12-22 is an amazing scene. The rich and prosperous people of Isaac go into the desert, because Abimelech, the king of the Philistines is afraid of them. They reopen one well after the other, but are always pushed back by the other herdsmen. And finally they find an open space. They find room by moving backward to an open space which they have not fought for, but which they believe, God has given to them. What a great openness, to let the "other," and even the enemy decide, what they must do and where should go. When there is an opening of minds, there is a new experience and new life-patterns.

It would have been so easy for them to fight for these wells and even to claim them as their inherited property, because already Abraham and his people had dug these wells many years before this incident in Genesis 26. Indeed it would have been quite natural, had they fought for this land and maybe nobody would have even recognized it as particularly bad behavior, because today in our societies we are used to fighting for our rights. We are used to fighting for our claims and also our true claims. We are used to fight for the so-called "civilized world," which we claim to protect even by dropping bombs.

When people of other religions and ideologies claim theirs to be the true comprehension of reality and life, we as Christians, tend to strike back with a plurality of truth-claims. Therefore I think, it is worth reflecting on what Isaac and his people did and ask ourselves

whether their reaction can be a model for being a Christian and living as a Christian in modern society. Isaac moved back and communal harmony grew and at the same time he found open space. Giving space to others sets us free as well. To accept that others are different, believe different, have different needs and to allow these claims to grow, sets us free on open ground.

I strongly believe that God wants all—every culture, every tribe, every nation and every religion—to have its own space on earth. Our world is not a homogeneous "global village," but a world where completely different people grow and live close to each other and where we every day grow closer to each other through new communication and transport technologies. It also depends on us to show that this world has enough space for everybody, if we are willing and open to give this space to others.

As Christians we often tend to be expansionist. Mission is understood as enlarging the Christian realm of influence. We are constantly widening our concerns to all parts of society. The poor, the oppressed, the environment, other religions etc. are made matters of concern for the Christian churches, which at the same time often tend to remain as they are and have been for generations. But widening frontiers of Christian concern first of all, means to give space in our hearts and minds for God's word and for other people's needs. This giving space is the center of Christian living and the starting point for a relevant mission.

Our text gives a hint, that in our pluralistic world, to be Christians not only means that we just accept the others as they are and to stick to our own standpoint, but that we also have to withdraw from classical, traditional, fixed theological positions. Only then will God give us open space. This is where the difference between co-existence and living together with people of other faiths begins.

God has given us this space in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross not for his own sake, but for others, for us. God's dialogue with the world is not a dialogue of strong positions and fundamental doctrines, but a weak dialogue of suffering out of which new creative life grows. When Jesus reduced his space to the hill of Calvary, he opened new space for all of us to live. And we are called to share this life with our Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and other neighbors.

BIBLE STUDY II

Rev. Chiropafadzo MOYO, Zimbabwe

Theme: In the beginning it was good... So where did it go wrong?

Text: Genesis 2:15–3:24



I have heard echoes of voices of mostly women and from some men in Church and the secular world, crying for gender sensitivity. Women worldwide today feel that they have been marginalized for a long time and that it is time men should be gender sensitive in all respects. It is this feminine awareness that made me think of the beginning of things and I remembered from my biblical reading that the Bible says that creation was good. My question then was, so where did creation or we go wrong? This question provoked me to want to read again the above text in a feminist context and try to examine the situation of the original status of women and then contextualize it with the experiences of women today.

In doing so I could not justify the use of lots of these commentaries that are around because I felt that they would take us into the old methodological studies that have become so traditional in Biblical Studies, and hence would lead us into a 'merry-go-round' kind of an argument. This is so because we have been reading these commentaries for years and the interpretations to some such texts have never changed. This could be the reason why we end up with a group such as that of the Circle of Concerned African Theologians trying to write an African Women's Bible Commentary.

I therefore have decided to use the structural method of exegesis to examine the above text. I know that modern readers, who are not used to narrative as the vehicle of serious thought, often find it difficult to appreciate the profundity and abiding relevance of such a study. Some would like to consider these stories as myths, but the truth of the matter is that they are considered as part of the truth of the Bible and that they teach about the origin of life.

Purpose of Creation

In the text we read about the creation of man and woman. Prior to this text, we read about the creation of humankind together and the purpose was to have dominion. In Genesis 2, there is no reason why Adam was created, except we hear that he was given the garden to till and live on thereafter.

Eve in this text is created for the purpose of fulfilling Creation, which at this point was found to be incomplete and not good after God had created all the good things. It was only in Adam that God's Creation was found lacking. This was according to God's evaluation. So God created Eve (meaning life) in order to bring the continuity of goodness in creation.

It is in the context of creation of Eve from Adam that we read the theology of development, guidance and appreciation. From the reading of the text we learn what activity Adam did in the garden before Eve came onto the scene: what he did was to name the animals and birds. Eve introduced the theology of development and guidance by way of giving Adam the fruit. God himself had started this theology of guidance when he said "Come let us create man..." And the woman says, "Take, eat."

In Africa women still echo the same theology of saying "Come, let us eat." This points to guidance. The word "eat/eaten" is recorded 20 times in these texts. And the word "knowing/knew/know" is recorded 4 times in the text. Eating suggests or points to a state of change, transformation, moving from one state to another. Jesus repeated this during the Last Supper. Eating is an expression of concern for others, a symbol of change. It is a characteristic of caring. It also denotes empowering, by giving energy or energizing. In Jesus' invitation to the table, we receive forgiveness and empowerment. We receive spiritual change from one stage to another. Likewise, Adam was going to be empowered, changed by participating in the invitation of Eve. He was going to change from lacking knowledge to gaining knowledge. This gives Eve qualities of a leader.

It is also interesting to note that the woman and the snake started the first theological discourse. The snake asked, "What did God say?", and Eve narrated God's command to Adam. In this command, God had told Adam that "if you eat of the tree, on that very day you will die" (2:17). Therefore Adam sat back and lay in fear of death. This is the same with the disciples of Jesus. When he was arrested, they ran away in fear of death. But for the woman, Eve, she was cou-

rageous, even to face death by being an experimenter. The same applies to the women who followed after Jesus to his grave. In both instances, men gained knowledge because of women. The result of the story of Adam and Eve was that they gained knowledge instead of death. And the disciples also gained knowledge of the resurrection because of women's experimental behavior.

Yes, the text is about the origin of sin. But also about the origin of human knowledge and development. Were it not for Eve, Adam was going to sit and do nothing in the garden. Also the fact that they were both naked and did not realize it suggests their lack of knowledge. And the realization of nakedness thereafter suggests the gaining of knowledge. And the result was that they were clothed, which is development. And all was because of the woman who started it.

We also learn from this text about the theology of appreciation. God appreciated God's creation. And Adam appreciated the creation of Eve. It is not God who praised Eve when she was created, it was Adam. And again after the sin of eating the fruit, the same Adam accuses God for creating Eve. Again this shows men's instability, or wavering. And maybe this is where the whole goodness of creation went wrong. When man changed from his good appraisal and comments into thinking that the woman is bad. Therefore there is the need of going back to the original comments of man after the creation of woman, and live according to those creative, good comments. Let the woman be regarded as the bone and flesh of man, suggesting friendship, good regard and equality, and let it not be, "the woman whom you gave me" (3:12). Men should move from the accusative into the theology of appreciation, which was the original quality of God in man.

BIBLE STUDY III

Rev. Magdaléna Forgáčová-ŠEVCIKOVA
Slovak Republic

Theme: The Magnificat

Text: Luke 1: 46-55



Our biblical text, called according to Vulgata, 'Magnificat', proclaims a wonderful and rich message. Its power is not self-evident, because it is manifested through the gentleness and humbleness of Mary, who sings the praise. Words are far away from boastful human powers. The whole message is shifted to the all-excelling perfection of God, whose power, holiness, mercy and faithfulness are praised.

Gentle approach, tenderness of spirit, but proclaiming immense power of message. Here I see the point, which might be interesting for us. Humbleness and tenderness. I do not mean to isolate these terms and misuse them to support some kind of naive virtue, which should keep woman in silence and in private sphere of worship. By humbleness and tenderness of spirit of Mary, I mean to see sound principles of healthy theology, which includes both feminine and masculine approach to the text and Christian message in general. Magnificat, sung by Mary is the most revolutionary document in the world.¹⁰⁶ The source of fascination for me is the very fact, that it conveys the revolutionary message. A Jewish girl, in a very special, not terribly great circumstances, expects a child, that was conceived out of marriage, whose origin is hard to explain according to any earthly

moral law. She became a morally suspicious woman, who bore a child before marriage, not rich, not socially significant by her being born a woman. She does not have any right to speak publicly, neither in synagogue, nor in the temple. Socially, morally and economically weak human being.... but she proclaims the greatest moral, social and economic revolution in the history of the universe. Is not it a wonderful paradox? But God loves paradoxes.

There may be many situations and places in our world, where women or men are socially, morally, economically and religiously weakened, but Magnificat, or better, God in Magnificat proves, that it is no obstacle for God's Spirit to use them as tools, proclaiming revolutionary message of Love. Let us explore Mary's velvety but revolutionary proclamation.

Firstly, I want to focus on the figure of Mary as a conveyor of the message.

Secondly, I want to explore her revolutionary praise.

Mary calls for Marys

Mary, or Elisabeth?

¹⁰⁶ William Barclay: The Gospel of Luke, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1975, str. 15

We have to mention that theologians are not in agreement about the human subject, or the "singer" of Magnificat. There are some, who support the idea that it was Elisabeth, who sang the Magnificat.¹⁰⁷ For me, it makes more sense to rely on Mary being the singer. Hereby I agree with majority of theologians who defend this position.

What kind of hymn is the Magnificat?

The words of Mary are certainly not of her own authorship. Many theologians associate Magnificat with the song of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1-10. Some opine that it is a composition of more OT quotation,¹⁰⁸ or that it is an old war song.¹⁰⁹

The text is not identical with Hannah's song and its background is authentically of Old Testament content. So, the hymn is really a composition of quotation from OT. It is possible, that such a hymn existed in worship life of Israel.

What is more important to us is, the meaning of the circumstances for that singing, the person who was singing and the special meaning it conveys. This song, or similar to songs must have been sung many times in many different circumstances.

*Its spirituality, though entirely Jewish in origin, has a universal quality, which since early centuries has won for it a firm place in the worship of the Christian church.*¹¹⁰

We ourselves have done such things in our worship. Many times we have sung for example Ein Feste Burg, or Silent night, etc. But in some special circumstances and place the song has it sounded suddenly different. We realized, with an awe and gooseflesh all over our body, that NOW, it is ABOUT US. It was the moment, when the text, either biblical, or the worshiping became a very personal message. Very personal on one side, but very universal, as well.

In such a moment we experience the amazing truth, that God loves us eternally, universally, but also very individually. Suddenly the all-exceeding power of God lifts our spirit to praise. This could be called, without exaggeration the "prophetic experience." God talks to us and through us.

Such is the impact of the Magnificat. Mary sings a famous, well-known hymn. But it is something very personal, very true about her circumstances. Her life, her body is the temple in which Life and Salvation was conceived. Through her body, the Word became flesh. That is why THIS IS the TIME to sing about: "God's servant Israel, ... being helped." Salvation has come, God has won and evil is conquered. This is a very personal experience with very universal consequences.

This "great things" that the "Mighty One has done" happened in a concrete country in concrete time and through the life of a very concrete woman—Virgin Mary. In God's gracious and revolutionary plan, God became man, God took on human body. The Body of woman and life of woman was unacceptable to God. Her body was a cradle and first dwelling of God's Son. Spirit of God gave Mary the ability to accept "those things," even though, she had not understood them completely. God's Spirit inspired Mary to sing praise for God's mighty acts.

This is a clear message for any woman in the world. God counts on women in the plan of Salvation, God accepts, loves and respects women's body and life. God makes women the "temples" where the life of sons and daughters of God is born. Women do have the ability to understand the things of the Spirit. Women do have the ability to accept them and women do have ability to praise God and to lead people to praise.

So, Mary, calls for Marys. What do I mean by this? Simply that these are sufficient reasons to welcome women in ministry and theology. Mary calls new Marys in every country and culture, who are in God's plan of salvation, whose life can be "pregnant" with God's mighty acts, who are sensitive to God's calling

¹⁰⁸ Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Michigan, 1988, pg. 84.

¹⁰⁹ David L. Tiede, Augusburg Commentary on the NT, Luke, Minneapolis, Minesota 1988, p. 54.

¹¹⁰ A.E. Harvey, The New English Bible, Companion to the NT, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press 1970, p. 227-228.

and who are able to serve God by praising Him and calling women and men to this praise.

I dare to say, that Mary, even though never called a prophet, has a very special place among prophets. Almost all prophets proclaimed future salvation of Israel and eventually of the entire world. Only one of all prophets, who had the mercy to live on the break of the eons, actually saw the Salvation, John the Baptist. He "was there" when the prophecies became flesh, when the Word, became flesh.

But look at Mary. In her Magnificat, she summarizes the all-important OT belief in the future salvation at all levels of life. But she can sing in past tense, because the fulfillment of them lives in her body. (verses 51-54) This is even more unique and more existential experience of God's promises being fulfilled. In the temple of Mary's body, there lives a joining of prophecies and fulfillment. What an experience! This proves that women are not excluded from the "company" of prophets. Prophets were called to do some symbolic acts, in which they manifested what is to happen to God's people. (For a good example see Jeremiah 13: 1-14, or Isaiah 20: 2-5). Mary was made a symbolic act to all generations for the whole world. Her body is the temple from which Salvation is poured on all people of all times.

This is another call for new Marys. Women are not excluded from prophetic dimension of ministry. They take part in a very special and unique experience, an existential one of God's promises, becoming truth.

Mary is the Mother of God, Theotokos, according to the Council in Ephes 431.

This is a very special position among all women. *From now on all generation will call me blessed. verse 48b*

This unique motherhood gives deeper meaning to the phenomena of motherhood. For Jewish girls, motherhood was a blessed status, because it was a source of hope, that she could give a birth to the Savior. It is a wonderful message for us today, when motherhood

many times means losing one's working place, being excluded from active society, or being treated as sick. Motherhood is renewal of life. Unfortunately, motherhood is many times distorted to bodily function and women at many places are turned into machines giving birth, increasing the population of a nation. In other places motherhood is seen as an obstacle to career and self-realization. Both notions are sick extremes.

Mary did not cease to exist in the story of Salvation. We see her in gospel stories, everywhere. She did not escape from the life and the story after giving birth to Jesus. She was experiencing the strange ways of God's saving deeds in her son's life. The program of Salvation, about which she sang in the Magnificat was unfolding in front of her eyes in life and ministry of her Son. Her career was not endangered by her child, on the contrary, in Jesus life all the careers of all times and places have been fulfilled and made meaningful.

In Mary we are called by God to be new Marys, who are not endangered by motherhood, but our motherhood can serve God for fulfilling God's plans.

Mary's motherhood does not discriminate unmarried or barren women. Many societies treat single, divorced or barren women as second class citizens, although there is no written basis or law for that.

Mary's motherhood is not natural by its origin. It started "*not from the will of man.*" (Concept similar to John 1, 13). It did not rely on natural laws. So even naturally barren can be filled with God's Spirit and can give birth to daughters and sons of God, by any kind of spiritual nurturing, teaching or tutoring. Neither woman, nor man are excluded from the noble role of motherhood of sons and daughters of God.

The Magnificat has always been a part of Christian worship.¹¹¹ It is still chanted or in the form of Advent hymn in liturgies.¹¹² This very fact confirms positive role of feminine aspect in Christian teaching. As the theological principle *lex orandi statuit legem*

¹¹¹ All used commentaries mention this fact

¹¹² Evanjelický spevník, (Slovak Lutheran hymnal), hymn 7, Énekeskönyv (Hungarian Lutheran hymnal), hymn 38

¹¹³ Theological principle, which has been existing in church since early centuries. This principle states, that law of worship constitutes the law of teaching. In other words, worship displays the content of truth, which is taught. There should be an organic connection between teaching and worship life and thus sound bilateral influence.

*credendi*¹¹³ is applied, if the Song of Mary has been always in worship, the women have always a place in the worshipping community and women's voices could lead people in praise.

We have to admit, that God certainly counts on women in God's plan of salvation and makes them contributing in praise of God's holy name.

Revolutionary dimension of the Magnificat

Mary's song pre-signs the birth of Jesus, who is already conceived in her body. Birth of Jesus is not a benediction of status quo. *The vision of the feast of God has in store for hungry a prophetic word which challenges realities, that appear unchangeable.*¹¹⁴ This is truly revolutionary character of the Magnificat. It reflects the revolutionary power of the gospel. Gospel of God's love indeed challenges realities, that appear unchangeable. Anything which is destructive and attacking God's love is challenged.

The Magnificat is the expression of the Spirit of God and fights the spirit of the world, of any kind of totalitarianism or simply any kind of tyranny.

If there are places or individuals, or societies, who treat women or men like a second class citizens, not worthy of respect, or education, or public life, or anything which could be a normal human right, such systems or thoughts are challenged by Jesus Christ and the Magnificat is a program, which announces this reality. The Magnificat begets revolution in each human being in the world, to make us challengers of seemingly unchangeable realities. It is inspired by begotten life of Savior as a source of begetting of deeds of gospel and faith in us.

The Magnificat assures us, that *none take comfort before God in their status, power, or affluence.*¹¹⁵

Whether we lift up manhood, or womanhood, it is all taking comfort in status. But to rely on status is unreliable. To be a man, or to be a woman, or to be rich, or to be poor, or to be a president or king, or queen, does not deserve salvation for the sake of status. Salvation comes from God and only God decides the way and time and place. It leads to the healthy relation between men and women. God initiated peace among all people and both sexes. Status means nothing, it is subject to change. NO status is to be the pillar for salvation or for service to God. God chooses and God challenges as God wills.

The Magnificat is brings threefold revolution:

- Moral, social and economic one.¹¹⁶
- Moral revolution is based in ability to see oneself. *For he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. Luke 1, 48*
- *Christ enables a man to see himself. It is a deathblow to pride.*¹¹⁷

Jesus' life is begotten in Mary and she is enabled to see her state clearly. This is a moral revolution starter in each of us. Men and women, everyone, in whose life, Christ's life had been begotten, can see clearly our equality in front of God. Our humble state. We are God's servants. God's mercy is decisive and not our state, or our gender, or anything else.

Social revolution. *Christ puts an end to the world's labels of prestige. Maretus, a middle age scholar said: Call no man worthless, for whom Christ died. When we realize this, it is not possible to speak about a common man anymore.*¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ David L. Tiede, *Augusburg Commentary on the NT, Luke*, Minneapolis, Minesota 1988, pg. 56

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, pg. 56

¹¹⁶ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1975, pg. 14-16

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, pg. 15

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, pg. 15

The Magnificat announces, that we have no worthless people. (See verses 50–52). That is why we cannot treat anyone as worthless, because such a pride is blown away by Christ's sacrifice for all. Neither men, nor women, simply none is to be called worthless, or "common". We are all dearly loved children of the Most High.

Economic revolution. *A Christian society is a society, where no man dares to have too much, while others have too little.*¹¹⁹ (See verse 53)

This may be very utopian, but again it is a very serious appeal. No social groups should be excluded from the benefits of society. Christians have to be mindful of their brothers and sisters. This is a suggestion for a cessation of any system, which would force women to be poor, or unable to make money, or to contribute actively in the life of society. If we argue that church message brings benefits and shares in benefits – not material, but spiritual, even more there, women should have their place and should not be forced to be poor.

Conclusion

The Magnificat is a rich message. It is a very broad welcome for both men and women. It fights the spirit of the world. Exclusion of women, or any other social

group is not of the spirit of gospel, manifested in the Magnificat which welcomes everyone to be the part of the story of salvation. It is confirmed by the person, who sings and by the content of her singing, which is not "her" singing, but inspired by the Spirit of God and the Son.

Used translation: New International Version.

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¹¹⁹ *ibid*, pg. 16

LWF Global Consultation "ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION"

4-8 November, 2001, Montreux, Switzerland

TIME	4 November	5 November 2001	6 November 2001	7 November 2001	8 November 2001
08:30		Opening Worship Dr. Susan McArver	Worship/ Bible Study Dr. Andreas Nehring	Worship/Bible Study Rev. Ch. Moyo	Worship/Bible Study Rev. M. Forgacova
09:00	Arrivals	PLENARY Greetings and Introduction: Agneta Ucko, Dep.Gen.Sec.LWF Rev. P. Rasolondraibe: Director DMD P. Singh: Exec. Secretary WICAS	PLENARY Engendering theology: What does it entail? Rev. Dr Beverley Haddad, South Africa Dr Kjell Nordstokke - Norway	Curriculum Formation	Group Reporting and Plenary
10:30		BREAK	BREAK		BREAK
11:00		PLENARY Journey Thus Far: An Overview of Feminist Perspectives From Around the World Dr. Ursula King-UK presented by Dr Diane Treacy-Cole	PLENARY Engendering Theology as an Inter-disciplinary Approach: Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist Panel Presentation: Integrating Gender Perspectives In the Curriculum Biblical –Dr. M. Melanchthon, India Systematics – Dr. John Hoffmeyer, USA Practical – Dr. Wagner-Rau, Germany	Curriculum Formation	Plenary 12.00 Closing Worship Europe Rev. Dr. Elisabeth Gerle
12:30		LUNCH	LUNCH		LUNCH
14:00		Feminist Perspectives in Theology Transforming Curriculum: A Regional update Dr Hisaku Kinukava, Asia Dr Isabelle Phiri, Africa Dr Irene Foulkes- Latin America Dr. Gudmundstottir – Europe Dr. Everist – North America and the Caribbean	Group discussions: Integrating gender perspectives In the curriculum: Barriers and Opportunities	Curriculum Formation	Departures
15:30		BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	
16:00		Group discussions	Integrating gender perspectives In the curriculum: group discussion contd....	Free time	
17:30	Orientation	Liturgical expressions Africa Dr. Martin Nelumbu	Liturgical expressions Asia Dr. Lam Tak Ho	Liturgical expressions Latin America Dr. Lothar Carlos Hoch	
18:30		DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	

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